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# NIMROD

## THE FIRST TYRANT.

*Εν μυρτου κλαδι το ξιφος φορησω.*



## ADVERTISEMENT.

IN order to paint the vicious and selfish passions which naturally instigate and abet the social crime of tyranny, I have chosen to refer my subject to that man, who (we are told) *began to be a mighty one in the earth*. Some apology for the choice of such a subject may perhaps be thought due to my countrymen, in whose happy experience this crime seems to be obsolete : therefore I would venture to suggest that the same passions still exist in every grade of society, though in none perhaps have they a more feeble existence than in the highest. But if this can be truly said of our favoured country, where the Sovereign is the foremost to obey the laws, which the people in their cumulative wisdom enact, yet we must remember that this blest condition does not obtain universally among the nations of the world, neither has it flourished here immemorially. And when we mark how tardily the conduct of men follows their

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The exceeding weakness of humanity in resisting the allurements of personal aggrandizement, when circumstances have combined to raise one man above his fellows, may be fairly argued from this curious fact—that, from the age of Nimrod to the present time, History has recorded but one Washington.



## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

NIMROD.

OPHIR, }  
OBAL, } *former companions of Nimrod.*

MILCAH, *a captive woman, the wife of Asshur.*

ADAH, *her attendant.*

ASSHUR, *a captive chief.*

JERAH, *the Captain of the works at the Tower of Babel.*

JAPHET, *the priest of Baal.*

*Magi—Soldiers—Men and captive Women.*





# NIMROD

## THE FIRST TYRANT.

SCENE I. BABYLON.

*An open Court within Nimrod's Palace.*

OBAL and OPHIR.

*Oph.* **W**HAT can his business be with us so early?  
I'm not half rested: and I thought to doze  
Over the morning hours till feasting time.  
But Nimrod's message came so peremptory,  
I scarce had time to cover me with a garment.

*Ob.* It was indeed most peremptory: Yet—  
Methinks thou'rt furbish'd like a bridegroom: I  
Came as I found myself, just from the field,  
Nor had the grace to doff this suit of war,  
Tho' it ill fits the purpose of the day;  
If I hear right.

*Oph.* About the wedding, mean ye?

*Ob.* Ay—that he weds the captive woman Milcah.

*Oph.* Faith it was said so. But this message—this  
Seems like a vane, to tell his mind hath veer'd.

*Ob.* Then turn which way it will—our's must go too.

*Oph.* All's well to Ophir: what's amiss to Obal?  
Time was when they could dance to the same tune.

*Ob.* We have danced long enough—I'm tired of  
dancing.

*Oph.* Then rest thee now, and let us dance anon.  
But here! the king—Good day, Sire!

*Enter NIMROD.*

Ophir! Obal!

I have sent for ye on a matter of moment.

*Oph.* Indeed! Prithee speak on; we wait thee, Sire.

*Nim.* I saw a dream, a troublous dream last night:  
And yet I know not why I should be troubled,  
But that I feel I am.

*Oph.* Oh Sir, say on:

We oft have counsell'd thee and we are still  
Faithful as sage, thy servants—I and Obal.

*Nim.* Obal!

*Ob.* Sire!

*Nim.* First I wish to give thee praise

Of thy good valour in our service ; then,  
It will be time to speak upon this dream :  
The spoil and prisoners came in last night,  
And I am told they are a goodly troop.  
What do you reckon them ?

*Ob.* Ten score and ten :  
Besides a crowd of women, and some children.

*Nim.* I give thee joy of such a pleasant prospect.  
Now I must tell this dream :—it was past midnight  
Tho' not a dawn of light gleam'd in the East.  
Methought I saw a multitude of doves,  
Thronging like bees ; and ever and anon  
They fared abroad, and foraged far and near.  
When Evening came, the doves flew gathering home,  
And some brought tares, some pulse, some corn, some  
olives.

Then, strange to see ! each laid his burden down  
Before one bird, which seem'd like all the rest,  
And brought no more than they. And this they did  
Day after day, unceasing : Till at last  
Their little gatherings grew to a round heap,  
On which that one bird sat and brooded close ;  
And none did take of it, tho' many hungered.  
Now, when they thus had stript the country round,  
There was a dearth, yet no bird touch'd that heap :

But one dark night, when all were still at rest,  
Up from Euphrates came a hungry rat,  
And burrow'd in the heap; when down it fell,  
And in the morning every living bird,  
Save only that which brooded o'er the store,  
Was changed of shape and plumage, and came round,  
Not as before, but now to eat his fill.  
Then, how they chirped and whistled to the wind!  
Methought it was in scorn of that one dove,  
Who sat all shamed and motionless.

—I woke:

I knew it was a dream:—and yet that dream  
So conjured up a waking phantasy;  
That, starting from my couch, I flew to Japhet.

*Oph.* And how did he interpret it?

*Nim.*

By Heaven!

The lazy seer, whom men do deem all learned,  
As if he lived on watching of the stars,  
Was so fast slumber-bound, that when he woke,  
And I had told him all, as I tell you,  
He yawn'd and yawn'd, and falter'd like a child.

*Oph.* Then said he nothing?

*Nim.*

Not a syllable,

But, that the dream was strange, was wonderful,  
And that he must awhile hold counsel of it,

And, if it were of ill, propitiate  
The God of Evil, and so prosper us.

*Oph.* But said he nought himself of explanation?

*Nim.* Nought, or he couch'd it in such general phrase,  
That it was like the universal air  
To mariner, who needs a breath from seaward  
To waft him into port.

*Oph.* Then does he promise  
To tell you more anon?

*Nim.* When noon is past  
He will say more :—meanwhile he sacrifices  
To Ahriman. That mystic sacrifice  
May find the secret ; but, if he deceives me—  
—I sent to tell you this ; and further, I  
Have purposed on this day to hold my wedding ;  
And you, who were the comrades of my toil,  
Must share my pleasures too.—The day rolls on ;  
Ere it is past I give my hand to Milcah.  
The merry-making is begun e'en now.  
Meet me, one hour before the sun goes down,  
In the great chamber : but meanwhile, at noon,  
It is our pleasure to survey the tower ;  
Be with me there—the work has lagg'd of late. [*Exit.*

*Ob.* How like two doves are we ? 'Tis not two years  
Ago, I was his match, and so were you ;

Ay—and his better : and e'en now we hold  
The same ; and he—I see no more in him.  
Yet he—O shame ! I say I do not like it.

*Oph.* And that thou dost maintain right sturdily :  
But sleep on't—last night's work was rough indeed  
So to distemper thee ! Sleep on't but once ;  
You'll be in fairer mood to cull your prize ;  
And there are comely ones, and you stand first  
For th' choice to-day ; then when you've pick'd a maid  
To your heart's liking, sleep again on that ;  
And then we'll talk on't.

*Ob.* First for the choice ! Why who  
Gives me the right to choose ? and to choose what ?  
Our mighty master graciously commands us  
To share these poor defenceless innocent women,  
Whom we ourselves have fought for, and have taken :  
Now what if this same master, in his mightiness,  
Should bid some others choose 'twixt you and me ?  
For we confess his mastership ; and yet  
Methinks if strength and hardihood and skill  
Weigh'd aught in the balance, I were good as he.  
Nay, I'll not choose, tho' Nimrod may command it ;  
He has no right but force, and I've as good :  
If force be right, why not let's to't at once,  
And let them stand that can, and stand alone



Without the leading strings of sovereignty ?  
I hate this life of grace, so that we serve not  
The common weal by our submission.

*Oph.*

Ha !

Sure in the skirmish thou hast met thy match,  
Who rolled thee in a nettle-bed, and left thee  
For very pity, thou didst grumble so.  
Why, what if Nimrod is a whit above us ?  
Are we not high enough ? and should we be  
As high without him ? He is but a peg,  
Which we ourselves have planted in the wall,  
To serve us for a hold-fast. Nay, man ! wipe  
Thy dusty visage, and go, sleep an hour :  
And merry dreams t'you, for your waking thoughts  
Are somewhat of the sorriest.

*Ob.*

Ever jesting,

Careless of season ! like a popinjay ;  
As talkative, and in as gay a trim !

[*Aside.*

*Oph.* Would that thy lot were mine ! To choose a girl  
From out that dainty score I saw brought in ;  
Why, man, go dust thyself. Now, why so grave ?

*Ob.* Ophir, thy mirth it suits me ill just now :  
My humour is more serious.

*Oph.*

Ho ! thou'st seen

An angel, Obal ; and art wonder-wrought !

Or hast thou lost some feathers in the fray,  
That thou forget'st to preen thyself? I'll take  
Thy turn with yonder damsels if it please thee?

*Ob.* Put off thy jesting, man, and hear me now.

*Oph.* Hear thee! most gladly; though thou well  
might'st grudge

These idle minutes; but some hell-hot fiend  
Hath dried thy sap, and sallow'd o'er thy face;  
It must be thou art scratch'd! But on: I listen.

*Ob.* Listen, and learn: thou well hast need! The fight  
Was wild and dangerous, and if naked truth  
Could aught prevail 'gainst artifice and arms,  
I might be here to tell a different tale,  
Or be myself the theme: But what can do  
A shepherd horde, smelling of milk and thyme,  
Against our ruffians, train'd to work of blood?  
Oh shame upon the trainers! So the ground  
Was strewed with hide-clad carcasses, unarm'd—  
Save against wolf or pard, and unoffending,  
—Unless it be offence to love their homes,  
Their wives, their little ones. But pass we on:  
I loathe to think upon it. We had bound  
The prisoners, and had seized the likeliest women,  
And march'd them off in triumph. Night came o'er.  
We laid us down to rest.—Then as I lay

Within my tent, brooding o'er past events,  
Just as my drowsy brain began to figure  
Strange scenes of the morning, flitting 'fore my eyes  
In quaint confusion, real yet withal false ;  
Methought a form more palpable than th' others  
Pass'd and repass'd, fixing his gaze on me,  
Then stopp'd as to accost me—

*Oph.*

Pure delusion !

The masquerade of reason ! yet I've known  
These dreamy visitants of gentler mien.  
But pardon me.—He stopp'd—

*Ob.*

I seized my sword—

What should have been my sword ; it was the scabbard,  
Bladeless and light. But then the figure spake :

“ If 'tis thy sword thou seekest, see it here ;  
And still it thirsts for blood, as if 'twere fever'd  
By glut of carnage ; know 'tis by my mercy  
If now it taste not thine : it would have drank  
Of mine this morning had it done thy will.”

And then a moonbeam peering through the clouds  
Glanced from the glittering blade, that seem'd to make  
Right for my heart, as it were thus—to thee—

*Oph.* Hold, hold !—such things pass well enough in  
dreams ;

Your waking thrusts are dangerous. Well, Sir ? well ?

*Ob.* Nay, I'll not damage thee ; I would not cut  
A thread of that gay jerkin—not to wear it.  
It pointed at my heart : the hand that grasp'd it  
Owed me no debt of mercy, for ten hours  
Were scarce complete since I had grappled with't  
Gloveless and weaponless, myself all arm'd,  
And would have cut the crook from out its clench  
But that the power was wanting, not the will.—  
It pointed at my heart, I could have said,  
For very shame, pass on. But then he spake  
So passionless in reason, as in right,  
I almost thought an angel had come down  
To bring Heaven's bidding.

*Oph.* Heaven bid thee ! bid what ?  
What ! thee ! thou dusty melancholy loon,  
Whose moodiness would stir an owl to mirth !  
Heaven should bid sprightlier spirits. Ha ! Heaven  
thee !

But mind me not—tell on.

*Ob.* Obal, said he,  
(He named my name) Obal, there is an eye  
That marks each deed of thine, each word, each thought ;  
A voice, that I and thou and all can hear,  
Cries in our hearts “ Do as thou would'st be done to.”  
Should that same call a reckoning of thy doings,

How wouldst thou answer it? Speak, by thy life!  
Thou that hast trampled on the innocent babe,  
Fetter'd its sire, and forced the helpless mother  
That bare it to his love; she sits and weeps,  
All comfortless because she weeps in vain.  
Who gave thee aught that was not given to them?  
Thou wast a babe as it, as powerless once:  
A husband and a father, never—never,  
Or but in mockery—It cannot be:—  
But that thou may'st know me—I am that sire,  
The same in all, save chains, and these I sought;  
But something in me scared thy coward crew,  
That they dared nought in mercy; but my life  
I hoard; God grant I may not hoard in vain!  
And here he sigh'd, and turn'd his eyes to Heaven.

*Oph.* Some phrenzied maniac, that had ta'en a blow  
On the pate that morning: but how ended it?

*Ob.* My spirit yearn'd within me, and I bade him  
Tell on, and tell it quickly; so he did:  
“ My name is Asshur—'tis a name well known  
In love, not fear; I was of fair possessions,  
The lord of flocks, and herds, and goodly land  
Water'd by yon rich stream. But what of these?  
I had a wedded wife, dearer than all  
Increased an hundred-fold; dearer than when

Her maiden fears gave in to my first love ;  
For she had borne an image of myself,  
Of that first love the fruit : ah me ! to think,  
Fierce beasts have batten'd on his delicate flesh,  
Which fiercer men had slaughter'd ! She, my wife,  
Three moons have waned and gone—was snatch'd away  
By thy curst crew—to be a slave, perchance  
To be—I dare not think on what beside :—  
Now, by the God of Heaven, and Earth, and Air,  
If thou hast aught of virtue in thy soul,  
If thou carest aught that God can do—or man,”  
And here he thrust so home, methought the point  
Well nigh sipp'd at my blood—“ take me too thither,  
A bondsman if thou wilt—so I be near her  
Bondage were freedom, were it ten times bondage.”  
And then he dash'd the weapon to the ground,  
And spake so home to my conception, that  
My very bowels seem'd to melt within me,  
And all my heart was his. 'Twas then I swear  
By our great God, that I would be as he,  
And wonder'd at myself for what I was.

*Oph.* As he ! how now ! thou art a pretty man  
To doff thy hard mail for a goat-skin cloak,  
To sit and simper like a love-sick girl,  
Talking of innocence and gentle times ;

While the meek turtle woos his willing mate,  
And all so modest too ! A shepherd, thou !  
Whistling for pastime to the teeming ewes,  
Or guiding to the teat the fresh-dropt lambs ;  
A proper shepherd thou !

*Ob.* O thou mayst sport,  
Like a full tiger, wreathing his lithe sides,  
Or sleeping calm in the luxurious sun,  
Till freak or hunger waken him to blood  
And cruel lust again. But yet, remember,  
The lion may wake too—the generous lion ;  
Of him beware, e'en thou. [Exit.

*Ophir, solus.* Well, this is rare,  
Our general turn'd shepherd ! this is rare !  
Oh, I will tell it in full company :  
It is a charm will spirit up our mirth,  
And scare the dusky fiend of melancholy :  
For I am sad, e'en I : that grave eyed maid—  
Me—who was used to flutter thro' life's day  
In one unclouded blaze of merry sunshine—  
She has benighted me ; and when I feel  
Myself alone, unwatch'd of gibing men,  
By Heaven I am the veriest moping owl  
That blinks at the bright noon. The grave eyed Milcah,  
Who looks no more of love and love's warm hues,

Than snow-clad Sinjar smells of mellow fruits ;  
What can she be to me ? Why then so constant  
In my lone thoughts and dreaming phantasies ?  
Yet what of this ? It is no twinge of love,  
If love for me were possible. For I swear,  
Were she to rise all proper and unveil'd  
Right here before my eyes, and stand defenceless  
Within my easy grasp, I swear by Heaven  
I would not lay a lustful finger on her,  
No, nor e'en look at her, unless it were  
To worship. Then why think of her, and brood  
Upon her image ? Are not lovelier damsels,  
All ripe and melting with luxurious warmth,  
Waiting for me ? And why am I away ?  
But that same maid—they say she's cold withal ;  
Cold as the dewy morn ; and holds at bay  
Great Nimrod's self, like a close-broody dove  
Flapping an eagle. I'll needs look to her,  
If but for this ; for if she hear him not,  
But still shall treasure up her maidenhood,  
When she could barter for it wealth and fame,  
Perhaps a charm to move his mountain will,—  
Oh—if he conquer not by such huge odds,  
It were a stake well worthy of the winning,  
To hang upon one's uncommended self



A treasure of such cost and rarity.  
But I must in; for there be wine and women,  
Fine playthings for light spirits—Footsteps! Hah  
The maid may pass this way—and Nimrod too—  
Ah Nimrod too: the maid were well enough:  
But he—yes, he'll come too: I must away. [Exit.

MILCAH and her Attendant ADAH.

*Mil. (musing.)* How wearily the sluggish hours drag on  
Between a captive and his liberty!  
The moon but thrice hath rounded her fair orb;  
Yet doth my sad imagination count  
Whole years of sorrow, since that dismal night  
When Nimrod's ruffian band o'erran our vale,  
And gave its peaceful cots to desolation.  
But why do I lament my hard endurance?  
I—whose restraint is perfect liberty  
Seen by those ills that other captives suffer;  
Condemn'd beneath the tasker's impious thong  
To raise yon monument of pride, and challenge  
The Almighty Power right in the face of Heaven.  
But they no leisure have to scan their woes,  
To grieve the present, or the future fear,  
And sicken at their own imaginings.

While I that want for nought which wealth can give,  
Like the dull miser starving o'er his stores,  
Midst gladness sadden, and stand silent by  
While others sing and dance: and this huge palace  
Rings with the din of revelry. How rather  
I come to gaze upon Heaven's canopy,  
All that is left me of my country here!  
How soft yon cloudless azure—and thou Sun  
How glorious—how majestic! Fountain, whence  
The good—and bad—alike drink life and health!  
Emblem of Power and Goodness infinite!  
How ill resembles this Man's earth-born power  
Presumptuous, impotent, unmerciful!  
This sight hath shed a brightness o'er my soul:—  
Adah!

*Ada.* My mistress!

*Mil.* Hither, dearest Adah,  
I fain would cheer me on this glorious day:  
Sing me that song which Asshur loved to hear,  
The song that led us back to happy Eden:  
Our home as happy then. Oh, could my voice  
Take up the gladsome air! Alas, 'tis mute—  
Mute to all ears but his. Sing Adah, sing.

[*Adah sings.*

## I.

Over Eden the soft South  
Pours her spice-encumber'd breath,  
Stealing fragrance from the mouth  
Of opening flowers—the vagrant wreath  
Of odorous jëssamine,  
Roses and eglantine,  
Sweet pinks and violets beneath.  
On the daisy-speckled lawn  
Sporting bounds the light-limb'd fawn ;  
Thro' the covert, o'er the mead,  
Frisks the colt with frolic speed ;  
The lazy lion stretch'd hard by  
Half slumbers, while his heavy eye,  
Rolling 'neath its cumbrous lid,  
Follows the fantastic kid,  
As he crops each nearest flower  
Fearless of the tyrant's power.  
Not yet the weak were doom'd to die ;  
Hunger bade not cruelty.

## II.

Amid the tangled green  
Two nobler forms are seen,  
With head erect, and reason-beaming eye,  
In native majesty.  
The one more fair, the one of more commanding mien.  
Alone of all the creatures round  
They converse hold in clear articulate sound,  
And blend their souls in kind society.  
Together now, with untaught harmony,  
Their grateful orisons they raise  
To their Creator's praise,  
In voices richly deep and sweetly high :  
The low so mingled with the loftier tone,  
The two seem melted into one,  
While woods and caves repeat the simple melody.  
Oh, how blest like Gods they are,  
She the fairest of the fair,  
Of mighty creatures mightiest he ;  
Ere beauty yet was pride—ere power was tyranny,

## III.

But hark ! a stranger step—I hear it move  
Along the silent grove !

Deep in the thicket skulks the conscious pair ;

A voice of no terrestrial sound,

Clear and solemn, fills the air ;

The creatures crouch around.

“ Where art thou, child of clay ?

Wouldst thou hide thyself from me,

Who made the eye ? Shall I not see ?

Then thou hast dared to disobey ;

Henceforth Earth accursed be,

Sorrow to Man, and Death :—Away.”

’Tis fix’d : with downcast eyes

They wander forth to work their destinies :

Rank weeds and brambles choke the goodly soil,

Care stalks abroad, and Pain, and Want, and sweltering

Toil,

*Mil.* ’Tis true—’tis true ! and we must toil and suffer,  
This is our heritage. Still let us praise  
The God of goodness for this glorious day :  
It was on such a day that the young Asshur

And I first met beneath a spreading cedar :  
That morn the light-limb'd antelope had started  
Hard by the rushy banks of old Euphrates ;  
Nor slack'd his airy speed till he had baffled  
His foes, amid the tangled forest-wood  
That hangs above our vale. A gentle youth,  
Faint from the chase, came up to me, and begg'd  
A cup of new-drawn milk ; then he related  
His story of the day, and loiter'd still,  
Talking of this and that and everything ;  
But never named himself ; and yet, forsooth,  
Himself was all of his I cared to know.  
Alas ! where is he now ? Canst thou tell, Adah ?  
O couldst thou tell me where !

*Ad.* He should be here ;  
This was the day his message spake about.

*Mil.* True, 'twas this very day ; and this day too  
Was counted by the spirit of my dream,  
Whose words I well remember :—" On that day  
The Sun shall not go down till thou art free."  
As yet the Sun is mounting in the Heavens ;  
If there be truth on earth it dwells with him,  
And he will come :—Methinks I hear e'en now  
The sound of martial music—Hark !—'Tis he—  
Asshur is come ! Asshur !—Out on my senses ;

'Tis the curst horn, that bids the sweltering slaves  
Repose in shelter from the mid-day sun ;  
Lest dull exhaustion should o'ercreep their limbs,  
And foil their master's will, ere darkness comes.  
Ah me, that this vicissitude of rest,  
Itself conspiring 'gainst the wretched victims,  
But fits them for more toil ! Death, death alone,  
Avenging Freedom's cause for helpless slaves,  
Brings a substantial, lasting remedy.—  
But see, the tyrant there has left his chamber ;  
'This way he moves. I must bethink myself  
To save me from his rude touch one day longer.

NIMROD *and* SOLDIERS.

*Nim.* The captives that were made last night—where  
are they ?

Are they securely guarded ?

*Sold.*

Sire, they lie

Chained in the nether dungeon of the Palace,  
As you commanded.

*Nim.*

Leave me now.—But you—

Who go last there, quick to the tower, and tell  
The captain of the works of their arrival.  
Bid him distribute them ; nor doff their fetters

Till toil and scanty diet hath well slackened  
Their stubborn spirits :—for they own no lord,  
Wild as young mountain-steeds, lusty as eagles ;  
I should be loth to let them try their strength :  
Begone—nor tarry, lest— [*Exit Soldier.*

Degraded caitiff!

To tremble so before me, and to catch,  
Quicker than utterance, the will of one—  
Nor better nor more strong than thou thyself,  
Didst thou but know thine own.—The coward fox  
Ne'er skulk'd before the growling of his kind :  
Nor did the timid deer e'er turn to flee  
Scared at his fellow's anger : Man ! vile man,  
How I despise thee ! For myself, I seem  
To rise a God by thy degeneracy :  
Thus far it answers well : yet, 'tis not so ;  
For sure I was ordained of high Heaven  
To soar above their vulgar destinies ;  
And in my single self to bear about  
The concentrated vigour of mankind.  
It must be so ;—I feel a something in me,  
That tells me I am born to rule the world :  
—Well, if I must, I must.—But who there wanders  
Without the palace, while the dome within  
Is filled with joy and festive harmony



In greeting to my bride? Ah! is it she?

What does this mean? [*Approaching her.*]

Say, gentle lady, say,

Why hast thou left—nay start not, I am thine;

And sure thou need'st not start so at thine own—

Why hast thou left thy chamber? Thou wast eager

To meet thy lord; was it not so? sweet lady!

But why thus pensive? Is the music powerless

To banish from thy soul curst melancholy;

And on thy wedding-day?

*Mil.*

Alas! great king,

Music, I ween, but nurses melancholy:

Not softest note of flute or rustic reed,

That speaks the tender thought of faithful shepherd,

Can banish sorrow; where real sorrow is.

*Nim.* Why dost thou talk of sorrow? that vile weed

Grows not in goodly soil; yet if in seeming

It haunt thy spirit—'tis a phantasy

That disappears at will.

*Mil.*

Nay—I would fain

Join with yon merry group, and laugh and sing;

And cease not—but to sing and laugh again.

But my sad soul—

*Nim.*

Out on thy silly sadness!

Hast thou or right or reason to be sad?

Dost thou want aught, or art in aught denied ?  
Didst thou not name the day ; and did not I,  
Who could command thee, did not I obey thee ?  
I'll not be duped again ; I was not born  
To wait a woman's pleasure. Haste within ;  
I'll follow thee anon—the ceremony  
Shall be perform'd forthwith.

*Mil.* Yet stay one moment,  
And listen to my tale : Thou wouldst not force,  
In anger, the frail thing thou deign'st to love ?  
Hear me but once then—

*Nim.* To the point, nor tarry  
In idle prefacing—a pretty pastime  
For Babel's monarch—the world's vanquisher—  
To watch the foolish lisplings of a woman,  
Biding her coyness like a heart-sick boy !  
On, on, why lingering ?

*Mil.* Great Sire, thy Slave  
Is awe-struck at thy mightiness ; her tongue  
Drops the half-utter'd word—

*Nim.* I say, on, on !

*Mil.* I will be bold : Soon as the paly sun  
Has left the world to darkness, I would fain  
Enjoy the boon night offers to the weary,  
And sleep in sweet forgetfulness till morn.

And thus I woo my pillow, and press close  
My aching eyelids : but the throbbing balls  
Roll in their sockets, hot and slumberless,  
And search into the caverns of my bosom.  
Oh ! there appear a thousand hideous forms,  
Ill-favour'd monsters, demons of despair,  
That hiss, and grin, and goad me to distraction,  
With loathsome epithets, and slanderous charges  
Of perjury, and avarice, and lust :  
Oh—how I weep till morn !

*Nim.* Such is the way  
Of maidens, craving what they know not, yet  
Pine to possess : 'tis a distemperament  
Easy of cure. But I'll not have thee frighted,  
My presence shall defend thee : I'll defy  
The powers of darkness to molest thee more.  
Then wilt thou look on me in gratitude ;  
And so mayst learn to love.

*Mil.* Love!—could I lay  
My naked soul before thee at this moment,  
And shew thee all the yearnings of my heart,  
How little wouldst thou think to ask for love!  
Love ne'er was lent for asking; like a toy  
To wear on a holiday.

*Nim.* Then I'll not ask thee ;

But though I ask not, think—I can command :  
Now answer once again : Dost love me, lady ?

*Mil.* Oh Sire, I was proceeding in my tale  
When something turn'd me from it. I will resume,  
I said—where was I?—I was saying, Sire—  
O press me not, good Sire, to speak to-day,  
My thoughts are all disorder'd.

*Nim.* Then I'll speak,  
Though thou must needs be mute : This is the day  
Thyself did name ; and, by myself I swear,  
To-morrow shall not see thee still a maid.  
All things are ready for the ceremony,  
Which I might have at noon, but for thy weakness :  
Now hear me once for all—I bid thee wait  
The hour of sunset, when I will attend thee :  
But not as now : for if thou still sayst nay,  
Thou peevish thing ! I'll pluck by very force  
(Thou know'st I can) the bud thou deem'st so rare,  
As if it in no garden grew but thine :  
Then its first freshness past—I'll cast it off  
Rare as it is, and give the hungry soldiers  
To feast on it at will : till thou shalt have  
No more occasion to deny thyself.

[*Exit.*

## MILCAH and ADAH.

*Ad.* Hide not thy face sweet mistress : fear him not,  
 Man's not the brute he fain would make himself ;  
 Nor can he but in madness—Man's no monster.

*Mil.* Nor woman the weak thing that man would  
 make her.

Force !—very force—did he not say by force ?  
 Then God of Heaven defend me in that hour :  
 So let him venture it. By very force !—  
 He will not tilt at me with spear and shield  
 And sword and lance—this mighty warrior !  
 By very force ! Have I not arms, and hands,  
 And teeth, and—who shall say a woman's soul ?  
 What mean these trinkets ? Hence ye lying baubles,  
 I spurn ye off from me as unclean things :  
 Away—away—and with ye all my womanhood.  
 Henceforth I am a man ! By very force !  
 I'll tear his heart out if he do me force :  
 I will, I swear I will :—

*Ad.* Peace, dearest mistress ;  
 He did not mean say force.

*Mil.* Thou fool, I heard him ;  
 By very force ! I challenge all his force.

But if by ruffian aid he master me,  
I'll cast my soul up at one strain; and then—  
Then he may force the rest.

*Ad.* Oh God! Oh God!  
She's frenzied in her passion.

*Mil.* Hence—away—  
I'll have no waiting-women, no soft maids  
To pander to my weakness. Hence! away!  
Stay, fetch me first—fetch me some weapons here,  
Such as the men use in their exercise:—  
The armoury's too full, bring all you can,  
They are well spared. Quick!

*Ad.* Oh! my lady's mad,  
Be quiet, dearest mistress.

*Mil.* Out! Begone! [*Exit Adah.*]  
Force! I must practise me. O let him try it;  
And Heaven be witness to my mastery!  
And if I choke him not, as a brave dog  
Throttles a wolf, may Heaven curse me for it;  
And Asshur call me harlot!—Asshur!—O Asshur!  
What art thou dreaming of me? Do I still  
Flow in thy heart's blood? Am I with thee still,  
When thou dost haste afield, and when return?  
Still spur thy strength? still soothe thy weariness?  
Dost thou still think of me?—O Asshur!—what,

If lying lips have slander'd me, and borne  
Strange stories for thine ear—dost thou believe them?  
What, if they name me the betroth'd of Nimrod?  
The minion of his chamber luxuries?  
The petted plaything of his household hours?  
Dost thou believe them? Oh! canst thou believe  
Thy wedded wife to be a heartless wanton?  
Canst thou believe it, Asshur? canst thou? [*She weeps.*

Oh!

That truth should lurk in secret like a knave,  
While falsehood walks abroad, like the true sun,  
And challenges the world to company! [*Still weeps.*

## SCENE II.

### *The Tower of Babel.*

ASSHUR (*working in chains*).

A CURSE on royalty! if this be it:  
A tower to reach the skies! so, so! methought  
It was the farthest deed of arrogance  
To lord it over us: but here to build  
This tower to Heaven—then is not God in Heaven?

O God if that thou be'st, and that thou art  
Who will gainsay me, shall this monster-pile  
Be raised to beard thee in thy majesty?  
But thou art infinite, and this grand mass  
To thee is nothing; and these mighty lords,  
Who fret them at thy sovereignty, are less  
To thine imagining, than little ants  
Are to the huge and stately elephant:  
O wouldst thou crush them, as his lordly foot  
Quenches their insect tribe! But thou art good  
And willest not destruction; while weak man  
Boasteth himself in mischief. Thus I dare  
Approach thee—[*Kneels*]. Of thy goodness, guard  
my Milcah,  
And for her me. So may thy will be done! [*Rises.*  
*My Milcah—I, a slave! and she—Oh she—*  
What, and where is she? What, I have no fear,  
Tho' she were——

*JERAH, the Captain of the Works (approaching).*

Holla—Sir! who's he that crouches?  
Some coward, thinking still on yesterday?  
Mind thee, Sir; here's what's cleft a skull ere now;  
Thine would scarce turn it: to thy work then, slave!  
How! Dost thou stand? To thy work—



*Assh.*

These fetters vex me ;

I could do more arm-free.

*Jer.*

Do more arm-fetter'd,

Or take thy freedom from this pole-axe ; knave !

I like him not.

[*Aside.*

*Assh.*

*Assh.* Thou wouldst not strike a prisoner,  
Chain'd hand and foot? And thou a man of war?  
Bred to high deeds!

*Jer.*

*Jer.* Then work, thou insolent coward ;  
Why dost thou stare at me ? Work—work—I say ;  
Or this shall take it out o'thee, once for all.

*Assh.* Hold!—I am sick at heart: thou wouldst not  
harm me.

Defenceless—unoffending—ill at ease—

*Jer.* Defenceless!—unoffending!—ill at ease!

What hath ease here? Defence!—wouldst thou dare  
think—

Thou hast offended to thy very life's worth—

'Thou knave! Take      [*Raises his axe to strike Asshur.*

*Assh.* Then I must—

*[Asshur snatches his weapon and strikes him down.]*

And so God pardon me.

Is he dead? Hah!—Thou, Sir!

[*Raising him.*

*Jer.*

Oh! dost thou dare—

This will be paid thee—Nimrod will—But Nimrod—

What's Nimrod now to me?—can Nimrod stop .  
This gash? I've served him well—too well—unless—  
He yet may serve me—tell him—I am—stay—  
To thy work—ah!—work—work— [Dies.]

*Assh.* Oh had I work'd and work'd  
All but this last! But it is done: And so  
Better, than if myself lay there, smote down  
Like an o'er-burden'd ass. I must have died,  
I—in whom others live. So it is done:  
And I will lay his body by this stone:  
The soul is off—Peace be to it! There, lie there:  
I must away—

*Soldiers enter.*

*1st. Sold.* Hold! not so fast—say first  
What's here?

*2nd. Sold.* Nay, ask him not. I saw the stroke.  
Now let him answer that.

*3rd. Sold.* And I—and so here's this  
To make it even. [Raising his poleaxe.]

*1st Sold.* [Holding his hand]. Fool, be still; be tem-  
perate:

Or we must answer all, when he is gone.

*2nd. Sold.* True—that's well said: for he's no seer of  
truth—

Nimrod.

1st. *Sold.* He'd hang us all at the first blush—  
And then make inquest of it.

3rd. *Sold.* But he's true  
As daylight, if he knows it.

2nd. *Sold.* More's the pity  
He should do aught not knowing it.

1st. *Sold.* Well said !  
And yet, 'tis not just there ; for all are doing  
If they've the power—

3rd. *Sold.* Who'll say that to Nimrod ?

1st. *Sold.* Say that ? Say what ? I said nothing.

2nd. *Sold.* Nor I—

But that I saw the stroke.

1st. *Sold.* It may be so :

Yet th' other might strike first.

3rd. *Sold.* The other ! he

Is one of us : sure he might strike, and no harm done.

2nd. *Sold.* Ay, if he hit nothing.

1st. *Sold.* But if he hit

This man, the first—how's the law then, think ye ?

3rd. *Sold.* Law ! Talk of that to Nimrod, if ye dare :

What's law to him ? Thank God, we're not such fools

As to be govern'd by a paper word. [mouth :

1st. *Sold.* Yet, 'twere more certain than a word of

Give me a law that's always one and th' same,  
Winter and summer, night and day.

*3rd. Sold.*

Then where

Is mercy to be found, when one is caught ?

If your law's written, where's your safety then ?

*2nd. Sold.* Trust honesty for that, and they'll not catch  
you.

*1st. Sold.* But what's to be done with this same prisoner  
If the dead man struck first ?

*3rd. Sold.*

What if he did ?

Had he not right to slay this fetter'd knave,

If it so seem'd him ? Where's the sin of that ?

*2nd. Sold.* 'Tis our fault that he's fetter'd, but a knave,  
He may be so, tho' not the more for calling.

*3rd. Sold.* Knave, or no knave, what's his life more for  
that ?

*1st. Sold.* And yet God made them both, and to kill  
either,

Would seem a like undoing of his work.

*3rd. Sold.* God made them ! then was Jerah nothing  
more than

This wretched shepherd ! Nimrod's mate in arms !

Nimrod was kin to him, and valued him

As his right hand. I'll see to this myself—

Fellow ! my prisoner !—Stir for the blood of thee !

2nd. Sold. Nimrod is all in all : for life or death,  
Our law, our God—Nimrod is all in all !

3rd. Sold. Well said—for here he comes : you've hit  
the time  
To a marvel friend ! hast not aught more of law ?  
Paper—I mean : ha !

*Enter NIMROD, OBAL, OPHIR, and Attendants ; they  
pass near, then stop to observe the Works.*

Nim. It is a goodly pile ! our children's children  
Shall gaze upon it to the end of time,  
And say, 'tis Nimrod's !

Oph. Oh ! Sire, this is life—  
To thrive eternal in the ears of men,  
Firm as the stones of this stupendous mound !  
What has the Thunderer more ?

Nim. Ay—thou art right :  
We build an immortality, whereby  
Our names shall echo thro' this breathing world,  
Ourselves invisible ! What would we more ?  
Yet this—what is it ? If we lie in th' dust,  
Deaf, as 'twere sleep-bound ; though the boundless air  
Should ring with Nimrod—but I, hear it not—  
How am I better ?

*Oph.* Nay—but to wake  
And to be told—Sire, the air welcomes thee ;  
The earth is full of thee ; the Heavens—

*Nim.* Hold, hold !

Talk not of waking : I've seen phantasies  
Which said I should not sleep. Obal ! what now ?  
What hast thou there ?

*Ob.* Sire, it would seem a corpse.

*Nim.* Ha ! so ! we'll look to it. It cannot be  
As my eyes tell me—Jerah ! Is he dead ?  
Dead ? Jerah ?

*3rd. Sold.* Please my Lord, I hold him here :  
I saw him do it, with my own eyes—I . . .

*Nim. (Aside).* This man was much to me. Who's he  
that did it ?

This youth, in fetters too ? It cannot be :  
Villain, thou liest : thyself hast done this deed :  
Thou and thy comrades there ! I see thy trick ;  
But 'twill not serve thee. Bind them—all the three ;  
Well will I pay ye this.

*3rd Sold.* O hear me, Sire—

*Nim.* Peace, villain ! take them off.

*1st. Sold. (Aside).* I thought as much :  
This is rare law !

*2nd. Sold. (Aside).* Paper, say I, for me !

*Nim. (Examining the body).* Yes, he is gone indeed ;  
if to be dead

Is to be gone. And now the mystery—  
Where is he gone? and what? For here is Jerah,  
As he was erst—all, but I know not what—  
Something that kept him strung and right in tune  
For speech and action : Where's that something now ?  
Or perched upon yon airy pinnacle,  
Still glorying o'er its work ? or darted off,  
To fill some glassy mansion of the sky,  
Spurns it this slack dull lump, and its fine deeds  
Mocks for infirmities? Or it may be  
Sunk in the brute earth, with yon ruddy pool,  
To fatten filthy worms ! Here, bear him off  
And give him honour.

Obal, what's that youth  
These knavish soldiers would ride off upon ?  
His mien is manly, and speaks thought and courage  
Beyond his years : what is he ?

*Ob.* He's a prisoner ;  
One of the latest, whom thy sovereign word  
Holds to their fetters.

*Nim.* So ? the lad seems gentle :  
Dost thou know aught of him ?

*Ob.* Sire, he fought bravely.

*Nim.* Ay—I'd be sworn to it. Unloose the boy ;  
I like his mien : I'll take him to our household ;  
We must repair our loss : See to it, Obal,  
And tell the youth our pleasure.

[*Exeunt NIMROD, OPHIR and Attendants, who  
have first unfettered ASSHUR.*

OBAL and ASSHUR.

*Assh.* Obal, thou art my friend : I see it well,  
Thou art my friend, and may God prosper thee !  
O that thou wert not Nimrod's. Yet the monster—  
I'd painted him more savage than he seems ;  
There's something generous in his tyrant nature,  
That I could almost love.

*Ob.* Hold that a little  
Till thou hast seen him more : for more acquaintance  
Will lend thee fairer judgment. Hold a little.

*Assh.* But it was noble to strike off my chains,  
Because I bravely fought—

*Ob.* And may again :  
Mind that I say : and deem thyself an axe  
Of finer temper, which thy lord would use  
For daintier work than hewing these rough stones.

*Assh.* Yet it is generous to forgive a foe ;



'Tis brave to trust a stranger in his presence :  
Is it not so ?

*Ob.* But what if it should be,  
Forgiveness waits upon the will to punish,  
Like a full leopard gloating at a fawn ?  
But it were brave to trust thee ! that it were :  
But think not he will trust thee to serve him,  
Save as in serving thou mayst serve thyself.  
There lies his mystery. He trusts no more,  
Than men to work their selfish covetings ;  
Sure so to reach his end.

*Assh.* Then how canst thou—

*Ob.* Oh, I'm right weary of it : sick to th' back-bone.  
Here am I called to quit my last night's toil,  
By some poor captive maiden, who must sit  
And sob her life away for all she's lost,  
And curse my hateful head. Sweet recompense !  
Oh I must choke this bursting flame within me,  
Or—but I will not speak : no need of words ;  
Which once launch'd forth into the wavy world,  
Who then shall pilot them ?

*Assh.* Dost thou fear me,  
That thou dost lock thy heart within thy breast ?  
I could have oped it once, but I would not :  
And dost thou fear me now ?

*Ob.* I fear thee not ;  
Nay, I would freely trust thee with my life :  
Methinks I owe it thee. But words—mere words,  
What can they do for us ? I said enough  
When we last met, to warrant every deed  
That words can harbinger.

*Assh.* Thou art my friend.  
Oh ! we shall prosper yet. But hear me this :  
That wife I spake of—she for whom I breathe ;  
Her name is Milcah—

*Ob.* Milcah !

*Assh.* Ah ! What now ?  
Thou'st news for me : yes, Milcah, Milcah—yes ;  
What dost thou know of Milcah ?

*Ob.* Was she tall,  
Of grave complexion, and a manly mind,  
Beneath most feminine beauty ?

*Assh.* She : the same.  
Chaste as the morning star, whose purity  
Shames the black Night to blushes ! Beautiful ?  
The fiercest senseless beast that preys on weakness,  
Had been awed back by her : the grim hyæna  
Would have forgot his nature ! What of her ?

*Ob.* If it be she, 'tis said the king himself . . . .

*Assh.* Impossible ! she'd rather ope her bosom

Before the glare of suckling lioness,  
Than slack th' extremest folding of her mantle  
To man on earth—save one. The king himself!  
I'll stake my eyes on't: what's a king to her?  
But pardon me if I am wrong: you said so?

*Ob.* Nay, I ne'er heard a breath against her fame.

*Assh.* No, nor the universal air, which pries  
Within close calumny's most jealous haunts:  
Though men might sully the fair light of day,  
They'd speak her spotless. But what's said of her?

*Ob.* 'Tis only said that she's betroth'd to the king.

*Assh.* She? who? not Milcah?

*Ob.* Milcah, as I hear.

*Assh.* Impossible! not Milcah? are you sure  
Of the name? and that she's tall and grave and wise,  
And most supremely beautiful?

*Ob.* Methinks

'Tis some three moons ago, we brought her in.

*Assh.* Three moons: by Heaven it must be! and  
betroth'd,

You're sure of that—betroth'd?

*Ob.* This very night

Is fix'd for th' ceremony.

*Assh.* God of Heaven! for marriage?  
Milcah to Nimrod? Then it can't be she;

My wife —my wedded wife ! there be two Milcahs.  
Tall—grave—and beautiful?—you're sure of that ?  
Of manly courage too ? 'tis strange, most strange !  
I never saw two such.

*Ob.* She's said to be  
A maid—this Milcah.

*Assh.* Then it can't be she :  
Deny her husband ! she ! impossible.  
It must be, there are two.

*Ob.* But foul report  
Will stain the purest truth. It may be so.

*Assh.* True, true, most true ; it *may*—it *may* be so.

*Ob.* But let's go to th' palace.

*Assh.* Ay, and rip  
The veil of tyranny, and fling abroad  
Its shameless mysteries to th' gaze of men ;  
Who'll stand aghast and wonder at their sloth,  
To find themselves the duped and crestless pimps  
Of that arch-chamberer ! By th' God of Heaven  
I'll break upon his sport, and lead him out  
All wroth and rutting like a pamper'd ram,  
And cry to the people—*Here ! your king, good people,*  
*Your law, your God ! why fall ye not to worship ?*  
And then I'll smite him with my sounding palm,  
That every stone of this huge pyramid

Shall echo with a laugh—as if to say,

O men, how are ye cravens !

*Ob.* Peace ! good friend :

We must be wary, if we would be well.

For tyrants' ears are like the invisible air,

And feed on secret words :—We must be in :

But first of that same Jerah ?

*Assh.* That dead man

Mean ye ?

*Ob.* The same : how came he by that wound ?

It seem'd fresh done.

*Assh.* Ay, and the pang is fresh

Within this heart : I had no wish to kill him :—

*Ob.* To kill him—Thou !

*Assh.* But that his axe was raised

To fall upon my head.

*Ob.* Then thou didst kill him ?

*Assh.* What could I less ?—Or I were dead myself.

Good words but fed his anger, till it burst

To whelm me for the freak : What could I less ?

*Ob.* I would not have it less ! But how so much,  
Fetter'd and weaponless ?

*Assh.* Heaven lent the thought ;

And with a spring, I snatch'd his villain axe,

Which seem'd to know the offender, and to fall



*Assh.* He that would breathe  
This tainted atmosphere, and still live on,  
Should be anointed with some hellish drug,  
To block his pores and sere his native juice.  
How can I say to truth—*Go hide thyself,*  
*And be for once a lie?*

*Ob.* And yet thou said'st it,  
When Nimrod order'd off those wretched soldiers  
To answer for thy deed.

*Assh.* A curse on Nimrod!  
A curse on tyranny, which forced that lie.  
I'd rather browse upon the barren rocks,  
Or crawl the vilest reptile thing on earth,  
So that I lived my own, than caper here  
The prime and glossiest pet of royalty,  
Shorn of my native will! O were I king,  
That I might fling the bauble to the crowd,  
To wreak their sport on it! The lie-suborner!  
Yes, he shall answer me that lie: He—Nimrod:  
Come away then to the palace.

*Ob.* Prudence—Prudence.  
[*Exeunt.*

## SCENE III.

*A Portico adjoining the Palace.*

*Captive Women with Guards.*

1st Wom. O GOD! that I had been a man, and  
slaughter'd  
By the fell butchers—so I were not here!

2nd Wom. And I: so had I saved my child—or died:  
The blessed innocent! Alas! That blossom—  
'Twas sweeter than a thousand honeysuckles:  
And yet they dash'd him on the flinty ground;  
Oh! his flesh, smoother than a turtle's egg,  
Spouted with blood! I saw it—

[Weeps.]

1st Wom. God of Heaven!  
My gallant man, brave as the morning sun,  
And faithful as the dewy breath of night,  
My gallant man! where is he?

2nd Wom. Haply he  
Like my poor innocent, all hack'd and hewn,  
Was fell'd like some tall mountain ash as fuel  
For this same bloated conqueror, to kindle



His cruel lust withal.—But where's thy daughter?

*1st Wom.* Alas! I know not—for the maid had gone  
To th' fields a flowering, and I was watching  
To see her back, all garlanded with roses:  
When three fierce ruffians burst upon my peace:  
Ah me! I ne'er had wrong'd them.

*2nd Wom.*

Then she's safe.

*1st Wom.* Oh she was nimble as an antelope,  
And could have skipp'd away from danger's thrust,  
Like wild doe from the cumbrous elephant.  
But safe? her mother here; her sire—oh safe!  
A maid of scarce twelve summers! rather I  
Had seen her dash'd, like thine, from this hard chance,  
Than think upon such safety.

*2nd Wom.*

Thank kind Heaven

She is not here, sweet little innocent maid,  
Her innocence had been a feeble safeguard:  
Tho' the brave lion might have honour'd it,  
These men are fiercer than that generous brute.

*MILCAH enters on one side, observing.*

*1st Wom.* O plague of tyranny!

*Mil.* [*Aside*].

O plague indeed!

O most unnatural plague! methinks it creeps

Upon men's hearts like some unearthly charm,  
Or wherefore should a goodly host of men  
Turn from the path in which their duty lies,  
Ay and their weal to boot, lest they should crush  
A single noxious weed— [Observing the Captives.

Methinks they are—

Yes—of our valley, some, and must bring tidings :  
But how to ask ? and hear perchance a tale  
To freeze me where I stand.

1st Wom. See there—some woman  
Of the king's chamber ! veil'd and bonneted  
From the fresh day—O curse of tyranny !  
Lest her free gaze should do his honour wrong.

2nd Wom. How vain—how foolish, is the will of  
power !

Who dream'd of erst, ere this insatiate ram  
Butted his fellows from the common fold,  
That one could swallow up the meal of ten ?  
O most preposterous thought ! But why, kind Nature,  
Hast thou not given an ulcer'd bleeding heart  
To lay its venom on the ruddy lips,  
And so accomplish justice ? The asp, the bee,  
The toad, the scorpion, and a thousand more,  
What have they done, that they are favour'd so  
Beyond poor womankind—whose loveliness

Shines glassier thro' her tears, and speeds the dart  
That's aimed at her peace?—So thank kind Heaven  
Thy daughter is not here—

1st *Wom.*

But I had watch'd

Her little spirit kindle to desire,  
Since first she hung upon this jealous breast  
Pouting her wants, and knew no joy beside ;  
Tho' soon she grew more prodigal of love,  
And prattled fondly to the silly goats,  
Or the brave dog—methinks I see him stand—  
Her young arms nestling in his shaggy neck,—  
And lick the childish babble from her lips :  
Then the poor cow—each thing that breathed around us  
So it loved me, she loved it.—And full oft  
Teeming with hope and fancy, she would wrap  
My distaff round with pretty swathing clothes,  
And nurse, and nurse, and play the doting mother  
That I had been to her. And so she grew  
To love all nature, and of late would wander  
The livelong day, and brave the wanton sun  
To stir the current of her maiden blood ;  
While I lived in her, and did hope—Oh! Oh! [*She weeps.*

*Mil.* [*Approaching*]. Comfort, good mother ; though  
thou well mayst weep ;

Alas ! nor thou alone :—but deadly hate

Smother thy grief, as it shall mine henceforth.

But have ye—say—have ye heard aught of Asshur?

*2nd Wom.* Asshur! O yes, I saw him yestermorn  
Spring, like a lightsome bee, from cot to cot,  
Methought it might have quicken'd their dead staves.  
Thou hast a wife, said he; a daughter thou;  
Wouldst have them go to feed the glutton tyrant?  
To th' unripe lads he spake of mothers—sisters—  
Or seized them by the arm and bad them stir,  
For their young lives, till native energy  
Flush'd their bright cheeks and answer'd to his call.  
But if he found a loon of sluggish mettle,  
He smote him with his staff, and chid him thus:  
Art thou a man? and wouldst thou be a slave?  
Asshur! O yes! I saw . . . .

*Mil.* But where? where last?  
Is he—[*Aside*] I dare not ask and yet must know—  
His pains I fear were lost? ha! was he taken?

*1st Wom.* Taken! first show the man of all their crew,  
Ay, or the dozen who could cope with Asshur;  
Methinks thou knowest him not to think that he  
Would lower his high front, or bend his knee  
To a thousand Nimrods; may be he was slain,  
If Heaven will'd it so: but taken—never!

*Mil.* Slain! God of Heaven! dear mother, say not so.  
Say aught but that—perchance he 'scaped, why not?

*1st Wom.* 'Scaped, like a fallow-deer! Asshur!

*Mil.* Then captured—  
It might be, one against a number? ha?

*1st Wom.* Asshur! thou dost not know him—he had  
fought

Like a pent tiger in a cause like that,  
Till his still lingering soul had oozed away  
From his slash'd carcase: Asshur ne'er had lent  
An unmaim'd arm to work the will of Nimrod!

*3rd Wom.* But if my eyes deceived me not, I saw him  
Chain'd, as we pass'd the tower.

*Mil.* Ha!

*2nd Wom.* And I;  
I knew him by his forehead and keen eye;  
For as he stoop'd he still gazed back at Heaven.

*1st Wom.* O there are many such; God of our Fathers!  
To see them in such plight!

*2nd Wom.* But he—I saw  
The scar upon his brow he took last year;  
Methought it bled afresh, that Heaven might see  
And thunder vengeance.

*3rd Wom.* And the curious coat

That Milcah work'd him : there's not other such  
In the wide world : I saw it.

*Mil.*

That was he.

Among the prisoners at the tower say ye?  
The scar—and did it bleed? did he seem pain'd?  
That coat would fit no other—that was he:  
Asshur! he—Asshur:—chain'd? did ye say chain'd?  
I'll see him, that I will—tho' all the spears  
Of all the Babelites should stand in th' way,  
I'll see him. [*Exit.*

*3rd Wom.* 'Tis herself! it must be Milcah.

*1st Wom.* Ah! Milcah! was it she?

*2nd Wom.*

Milcah! Indeed!

*3rd Wom.* It was her voice too : I remember 't well.  
But veil'd! that cannot be to hide her shame,  
Else she's much alter'd from the thing she was,  
When I last saw her. 'Twas a holiday  
Some four moons past, when all the neighbours met  
To give her joyance of her first-born child;  
'Twas then I saw her last.

*2nd Wom.*

I too was there,

At Asshur's tents :—it was a pleasant meeting:  
To think of that, and this!

*3rd Wom.*

There was she sitting  
On the fresh turf beneath a sycamore,

*2nd Wom.* Oh I remember.

*2nd Wom.* I well remember.

By Heaven's good bounty : and if then an angel  
Had ridden down upon the beams of day,  
And bade him name aloud a single want,  
And he should have't, he had been silent still.  
Not twice ten suns had couch'd in the far West,  
When that brave boy was dash'd upon the stones,  
And she his wife snatch'd off; and then he stood  
Alone, nor father he, nor husband more :  
With nothing living but his own poor flesh  
To tease him with the sense of all he wanted !

*2nd Wom.* God's will be done! His ways are wonderful;  
Perchance this Nimrod, like an unclean beast,  
Is doom'd to bear the burden of strong sin,  
And work iniquity to teach us patience.

*All.* God's will be done: his ways are wonderful!

*2nd Wom.* Then let us join our praise.

*All.*

How can we sing

Our country's song—and we in this strange land?

*2nd Wom.* But God is everywhere, as of all time:  
No land is strange to Him: O were ye cast  
Beyond earth's limits to the end of space,  
He still were there. Be he our home, our country.

[*They sing.*]

I.

'Twas on a morn,  
The sun all glorious above the world  
His stream of warmth and health unfurl'd;  
When more in pity than in scorn  
The mighty God look'd down from Heaven's height,  
Where'er might reach his holy light:  
If man deserved the gracious boon?  
Or had he made in vain  
The joyous sun, the gentle moon,  
For him more surely so to work his fellow's pain?



## II.

As some yearning father weeps,  
Watching while his sick child sleeps ;  
So the good God rued to see  
Man's perverse iniquity.  
Which way turn'd his anxious eye,  
All was evil, evil, evil :  
Strife and murder, lust and revel,  
Swagger'd to the modest sky :  
His glorious visage sicken'd at the sight,  
As when the rosy day grows pale before the night.

## III.

“ Must my spirit strive for aye  
With this froward child of clay ?”  
So he spake and waved his hand :  
Heaven bow'd and darkly lower'd ;  
Then its sluicy vengeance pour'd  
Flat upon the trembling land.  
Ocean too, till then who lay  
Smiling like a child at play,  
Heaved amain his giant sides,  
And roll'd upon the earth his melancholy tides.

## IV.

Where the haughty warrior then ?  
Fat with blood of slaughter'd men,  
See him thirsting still for more,  
To gorge his fame with human gore.  
A work of blood was on his hand ;  
A thousand men at his command  
Waited but a signal word,  
In thousand hearts to flesh the sword :  
Ready leash'd like hounds they stood,  
E'en as if the work were good.  
Poor fools ! they listen'd to the cunning story,  
Which blazon'd fiendish strife with the fair name of  
glory.

## V.

Hear him cursing at the blast !  
Still the big rain splashes fast.  
Shall a warrior then, he cries,  
Wait on the capricious skies ?  
Strike—but ere he spake the whole,  
The waters rush'd upon his soul ;

And he flounder'd aghast, and he howl'd in despair  
To his Moloch, or Baal; but no God was there  
Save the God of the whirlwind which swept thro' the air.

*Enter NIMROD, OPHIR, and Train; afterwards  
OBAL and ASSHUR.*

*Nim.* Music! how now?

*Oph.* Ha! ha! they would be merry—  
These queans o'th'valley: I love merriment.

*Nim.* I hate it—music too.

*Oph.* Well,—I too hate it—  
Hate it, for all I love; I've had enough:  
Though there's some charm in music—

*Nim.* By the Sun,  
Methinks 'tis witchery: for I've seen men stand  
Bound still as stones,—while I was present there,—  
Careless of aught but that.

*Oph.* It has rare power.

*Nim.* Once, I remember, as we pass'd a cot,—  
That day we were to slay the Resenite,—  
A maid sat singing: may my right arm wither,  
Prest as we were, if not a score of men  
Forgot the purpose of their iron souls,  
And smiled like idiots.

*Oph.*

It is most strange.

*Nim.* 'Tis dangerous: For me—I'd rather brave  
The brutish vigour of a host of men,  
Which moves to the eye, and spends itself abroad .  
Like a flush stream, than this mysterious spell—  
This airy influence of a viewless sound,  
Which thrills into the blood and revels there,  
Impassioning the soul, despite of all  
That stirs and speaks around. I long have thought  
To serve me of it; and for that did fetch  
Our band of minstrels: haply they might sway  
Men's stubborn spirits to our royal will;  
But all's in vain if every witch of th' earth  
Is free to vent her cursed sorceries.  
Hell!—but I'll match them.—Obal, I name thee  
To Jerah's honours: thou hast earn'd my love,  
I well would pay thee: Here!—let some of th' guards  
Escort these women to the tower works:  
We lack hands there, for I am purposed now  
To raise it ten times higher than before,  
And, when that's done, I'll add a story still;  
So none shall come to whisper shame of it,  
And say that Nimrod was a common man  
To leave so poor a token.

[*Exeunt* OBAL, ASSHUR, *Guards with Women.*

*Oph.* Oh, by th' Gods,  
It is a noble thought—a noble thought !  
And these that would have gone among the soldiers,  
The soldiers can well spare them.

*Nim.* Nay, they shall—  
The soldiers ! they shall spare them.

*Oph.* Obal too—  
Obal so loves his master.

*Nim.* What of that ?  
His love—what's that to me ? if it were doubtful,  
I would so poise that doubt upon this spear  
That 'twere soon certified. But he does love me ?

*Oph.* Faith ! he were graceless if he loved thee not.

*Nim.* And headless too it might be. Ophir, thou  
Art nearer to my heart than any else :  
I will deny thee nought.

*Oph.* Most gracious sire,  
You know my loyalty.

*Nim.* Ay, and for that  
I ope my soul to thee. You say he loves me :  
I know he loves me—but he's changed of late,  
Much changed ; for now he never laughs as erst,  
But his brow juts as it were big with thought :  
And as my eye sweeps past him, his the while  
Rests upon me as if his thought were there.

Now—but I know he loves me.

*Oph.* If he doth not,  
The crime be on my head. I'll pledge for him;  
We are fast friends.

*Nim.* Oh, but I know he loves me.  
But thou'rt so dear to me, I speak to thee  
My crudest fancies, ere they grow to thoughts :  
So watch him—watch him : but I know he loves me,  
As I love him and thee. We three are brothers :  
And we will pass the day as such indeed ;  
And will be joyous till the sun goes down.  
But thou to the banquet-room : and Obal too !  
I must speak first with Heaven : there, my Ophir,  
Are writ the destinies by which we tower  
To immortality. But ask me something ;  
For my love frets like a sharp-bitted steed  
Who fain would speed his rider i'spite of him.

[*Exit with Guards.*]

*Oph.* [*solus*]. Faith ! If I ask it—I will ask it so  
That I may get for asking. I have lived,  
And learn'd by living, that the breath of Nimrod  
Blows not for love, and if it deigns to fan  
The ash that smoulders on a neighbour's hearth,  
'Tis but to warm his proper hands withal.  
Love ! ha ha ! Love ! to talk of love to me !

'Tis a knave's fate to deem his friend a fool.  
Oh! if he loves the maid as he loves me,  
He needs must marry her. Poor odds for Ophir.  
But let him love his love as he likes best ;  
It serves me well : what would I better ? I  
Have love enough by Heaven while it lasts :  
And when all's over—I've as much as he !  
Ay—or as little.—Immortality !  
Pshaw ! how that big word bubbles in his dreams !  
When not a day can glide so smoothly by,  
As not to burst it. What's his Jerah now ?  
What he may be ere night : a lump—a stench—  
That rots his pride to a ridiculous lie !  
I should have laugh'd to hear him philosophize,  
But—faith ! I could not : for a stony dread  
Crusted the limber muscles of my face :  
Methought they grated crossways. But my Obal—  
My mate, my friend, my brother ! I watch him !  
To tell again of his good honesty,  
And make his truth a crime ? No no : I'm well  
To fight his battles in the broad daylight,  
Ay, or by night, so that the foe's a foe :  
But a friend—old friend, honest friend ! but Obal !  
Nimrod may love him well, and love me too ;  
But I'll not breathe a breath to harm my friend.





No—No—I'm far too friendly with the earth,  
And earth's fair daughters, to go heavenward—I.  
But—for your bloody thrusts and glorious cuts,  
Crack'd skulls and bruises—these were well enough  
If no soft lap would nurse an unscathed man. [while?

*Ob.* Where's our great master Nimrod gone this

*Oph.* Gone! where should go a bridegroom? to his  
love.

*Assh.* Where? To whom? Where? Thou didst not  
say to whom?

*Ob.* Hush! hush! I'll talk with thee.—To the maid  
Milcah?

*Oph.* He's just gone hence vowing a world of love.

*Assh.* To Milcah?

*Oph.* Pardon—thou art warm, young man.

*Ob.* Patience good youth: But Ophir, tell me now,  
Does he still vent his love upon that woman,  
The captive they call Milcah?

*Oph.* Milcah! ha!

Thou art his Milcah, man; thou; ay, and I:  
I too: he loves me most unmeasuredly:  
And thee! by God, he'd know thy very thoughts.  
How hast thou won him so?

*Ob.* What! said he this?

*Oph.* Yes, by the stars.

*Ob.* Then I must look to me.

*Oph.* Thou art right. Obal, here's a hand: enough.

*Ob.* Ah, honest Ophir, thou art Ophir still;  
And givest the lie to thy fantastic trim.

*Oph.* And thou believe it: Nimrod loves thee, Obal:  
He's gone to the temple, God be with thee now.

*Ob.* And with thee too. We must prepare to greet him,  
And do him service for this love of his.

[*Exeunt OBAL and ASSHUR; OPHIR remains.*]

*Oph.* So much for Ophir's watching! noble service!  
Prime post of honour for a veteran soldier!  
Ophir the spy!—why not the pimp? methinks  
It were the prettiest pastime of the twain,  
To go between some buxom girl and him.  
But a spy—Ha! By the bright stars—a lady!

*Enter MILCAH.*

Nay then—if needs I am to play the spy,  
I'll take a peep beneath that veil of hers,  
Which seems to cloak a pretty world of mischief.  
Whate'er thou art, fair damsel, for 'tis plain  
That thou art fair—too fair for the coarse day,  
And yet how fair methinks I fain would see—

[*Lifts up her veil.*]

Nay, pardon an old man—unless it be  
A graceless crime to love a pretty face—  
Like thine, fair lady— [Peeping. *He starts back.*  
By the Heavens 'tis she !  
[Falling on one knee.

Oh pardon me indeed this rude offence,  
And take my reverent homage : Grace, lady.

*Mil.* If I could punish, you might crave my grace :  
But know that he who with unhallow'd touch  
Should dare to taint the garment hem of her  
Whose faith is plighted to another man,  
My grace were not for him.

*Oph.* O think not thou  
That I would dare to let a glance of mine  
Confound thy maiden cheek : I knew thee not,  
Or it had fallen abash'd upon these stones,  
While my heart worshipp'd thee. And so the more  
For that thy faith is plighted, as thou say'st,  
And, as I hear, to our great master, Nimrod.

*Mil.* He lied, who told thee that.

*Oph.* 'Twas Nimrod's self.

*Mil.* Then he lied doubly—knowing that he lied.

*Oph.* O be not wroth with me : for what I hear  
From lips like thine, though it shall go to prove  
My seeming knowledge to be all one lie,

I will believe it, and unlearn the whole  
I knew before for their sweet history.

*Mil.* Then if thou canst, unlearn thy slavery,  
And know thyself to be a free-born man.

*Oph.* But who could hear the music of that voice,  
Or stand beneath the heaven of Milcah's eye,  
And not confess himself to be a slave?

*Mil.* In other climes a woman's voice and eye  
Might move a brave man to some deed of virtue;  
But in kings' palaces a man can spare  
Nought but the homage of his glozing lips,  
Lest it should weary him—or soil his vest.

*Oph.* But such a woman as I see before me  
Might move the elements:—methinks her smile  
Would furbish o'er the sable cloak of night,  
And melt unseemly vapours like the sun.

*Mil.* Or aught but fortify a craven's heart.

*Oph.* [*starting*]. A craven! did she mean that word  
for Ophir?

*Mil.* He—who can stand and see a helpless woman  
Led forth a sacrifice to heartless lust,  
Nor feel a pang, save envy at the chance  
Which doom'd the choicest victim to the strongest,  
While still his envy waits upon his fear,  
For *him* she meant that word—he is the craven. [*Exit.*

*Oph.* And Ophir is the man. 'Tis true—most true!  
Ah—Ophir! Ophir! how degenerate  
From him, who once upon the mountain side  
Made truth his loadstar, virtue the fair end  
Of all his simple deeds; without a want,  
Without a fear! But on his fellow's neck  
Daring to plant an inconsiderate foot,  
The world is grown his foe; and while he kicks  
The wretch beneath him, he is kick'd in turn  
By him that stands above; wronging or wrong'd,  
Till truth cries out from virtue's sanctuary,  
And calls him *craven*: so he is a craven,  
Who once was brave and free.—Down, vassal fear!  
Up, pride! to be as erst, or be no more! [Exit.

## SCENE IV.

*The Temple of Baal, and Cave of Ahriman.*

JAPHET and Magi.

*Japh.* Look out again, a sky of so sad aspect  
Is pregnant of event. Are the men back?

1st *Mag.* All.—

*Japh.* They are back betimes.

*1st Mag.* And laden too.  
They say the willing earth uncloaked her lap,  
And gave her closest treasures, all unask'd,  
To the first comer.

*Japh.* Ha!—this easy tone  
Is discord to the wise. Where are the men?—  
Bid them come in.

*Re-enter Second Magus.*

*2nd Mag.* The red mist gathers still,  
And clips the generous sun of half his gold.

*Japh.* Dire things are breeding, or in earth or air;  
We'll to the sacrifice.

*1st Mag.* The men are gone  
Straight to the cave.

*Japh.* And all their spoil—where is it?

*1st Mag.* At the cave too.

*Japh.* Then are we late in going:  
For the world teems with some unnatural birth,  
Which soon will burst abroad all unawares;  
And we shall gape like children.—To the cave—

[*Exeunt all but JAPHET.*

Where Mithra ne'er unveil'd his holy face;

Tho' still he may be there invisible,—  
If aught invisible may be of him  
Whose essence is the very light of light :—  
But we must converse with his enemies,  
The fiends of darkness who do minister  
To uncreated Ahriman; that so  
We may approach him on the mountain-top,  
Worthier to do him service. Be it sin,  
Eternal Yesdan, to court evil knowledge,  
Thereby to judge the good ;—why then this sense  
That pricks us on to doubt of what we are,  
And what we may be? Be it sin to know  
That which is hidden; why then hidden only,  
And not unmade at all? But thou hast made  
Nothing of evil, who art only good :  
And we are thine :—'tis true : this evil then  
Is not of thee, and should be nought to us :  
But yet we are so blended with its being—  
So circumscribed—so stall'd and cribb'd with it,  
That 'twere as well to bid the houseless traveller  
Take him no heed to learn the serpent's haunts,  
As bid us learn not evil : But this evil  
If it be not of thee—for thou art good,—  
Whence is it sprung? it must be of itself—  
Evil eternally. Great Ahriman!

Thou too art glorious. We will do thee honour :  
So mayst thou teach us some mysterious charm  
To walk unharm'd upon this poison'd earth. [*Exit.*

*The Cave.*

*Men with Baskets.*

*1st Man.* This long-jaw'd wolf—I spied her all intent  
Gnawing a kid—and, tho' I thrust my spear  
Right where her leg, stretch'd forward o'er the victim,  
Left all her soft lung bare—she still gnaw'd on,  
Till death had slack'd her gripe—the grinning fool !

*2nd Man.* But is she full of whelps ?—

*1st Man.* Why look ye here !  
Some score methinks, beside the luckless kid  
Must be pack'd here.

*2nd Man.* Ay, there's a score indeed !  
The glutton vixen ! See, what I've got here !

*1st Man.* Is that a viper ?

*2nd Man.* Ay.

*1st Man.* And that ?

*2nd Man.* A toad,—  
Taken at his filthy pastime !

See ! this lizard



Was sleeping in the sun—may be a dreaming,  
When I stole up, and with a sallow twig  
Switch'd the luxurious sluggard, that his flesh  
Curl'd like an aspen leaf. What hast thou else?

1st *Man*. Some sprigs of homony, and dire foxglove,  
And deadly henbane gather'd in the mist.  
See here! these roots have all their quality,  
I know their virtue—tho' their name and story,  
They must be sought where more of wisdom is  
Than in this flashy world. Ha! there! a bat?  
How didst thou come by that, man? One would think

*Enter NIMROD, (cloaked and unobserved).*

That thou couldst hover on the infernal fog.  
'Tis a rare bantling!

2nd *Man*. Ah! the pretty hell-chick!  
I mark'd it flitting in the tardy dawn,  
And would have given one half my jolly bag,  
To clap the wee chit there: it dropp'd and dropp'd,  
As if to mock me; when a stately owl  
Came flapping from a crannied rock hard by,  
And stooping right upon the silly youngster,  
Bore him aground, and then he blink'd about,  
As if the fool had done a noble feat.

1st Man. Ha ! ha ! I've seen his like.

2nd Man. Ay, and I too :  
But while the lubber thought himself a king,  
I tapp'd him on the head with this same staff—  
And here he is.

1st Man. That was well done : ha ! ha !

Nim. [*aside*]. By heaven, I like not that same narrative.

2nd Man. How things of little strength do swell them—  
That others are of less ! [*selves,*

1st Man. Just so : but when  
A stronger comes, with what a little tap  
They shrink into themselves !

Nim. [*aside*]. Zounds ! that two curs  
Slaves of my slave, should dare to think and speak,  
As if they were as good as I myself.  
What if I kill them both ? Nay—but they're two ;  
And know not I am Nimrod. [*Retires farther back.*

2nd Man. We might name  
That very man of men—our Nimrod there,  
Who swells above us like the braggart owl,  
Pouncing on us poor bats just for his sport,  
Methinks . . . .

1st Man. Hush ! hush ! I've heard, deaf walls  
have ears,

That eyes are watching in the darkest caves :  
Do I not see a man ?

*[Nimrod retires quite into the darkness of the cave.]*

*2nd Man.* 'Tis but a shadow :

Or soon shall be one. *[Looks into the cave.]*

I was only thinking  
How Nimrod's mighty self would sink like ashes  
Before a mightier.

*1st Man.* That was truly thought.

*2nd Man.* By Ahriman, if he were here—this Nimrod,  
I could as easily—ay, and as fain,  
Just thrust this pike of mine between his ribs,  
As thou didst serve the wolf ; and yet this Nimrod,  
If I but pass within the cast of his eye,  
I e'en must crouch and shudder like a chicken,  
As if I were not free to breathe the air  
But by his leave and bounty.

*1st Man.* True—most true.

*2nd Man.* 'Tis true indeed, I would that it were false.  
Time was, they say, when every living soul  
Held its free tenement of God alone ;  
But now this Ahriman of ours—methinks  
His mystic learning cloaks a deal of craft.  
Hark ! footsteps—it is Japhet. Now for the show.

*Enter Magi.*

1st *Mag.* The day is sultry.—

2nd *Mag.* But this cave is fresh  
Methinks as midnight.

1st *Mag.* Ay—and as dark too.  
Holla! where are ye, men?

1st *Man.* Here, sirs, here! here!  
Have care o' the basket there!

1st *Mag.* Avaunt ye men!  
Now ye have minister'd your paltry share  
Of this dread sacrifice,—which must be veil'd  
In darkness treble dark, and mantled close  
With walls of unwrought earth, lest eye or ear  
Of uninitiate doom the luckless wight  
To Hell's perdition. [*Exeunt the men.*]

*Nim.* [*in the back of the cave*]. What is Hell to me?  
Yet my blood curdles—'tis the cold, methinks,  
Of this damp cave.

2nd *Mag.* But wherefore tarries Japhet?  
His eye seem'd heavy as we left him now,  
And spake a burden'd mind.

1st *Mag.* 'Tis that strange dream  
That Nimrod dream'd last night—it puzzles him:

And yet it must be known, for the king's wrath  
Might work us mischief.

*2nd Mag.* But his cunning wrath  
Plays handmaid to his prudence : know you not,  
We are the very crutch that props his name ?  
Think you those brawny fools would crouch before him  
For his own feeble self ? Nay—Nay—'Tis Japhet  
Whose mystery holds fast their prostrate minds.  
This is his sceptre, not the bauble gold  
Which glitters in their eyes. What would he be,  
If not that we proclaim'd he is of Heaven,  
And vouch'd it with such dark solemnities,  
That men believe in it, and hail him king.  
But strike this key-stone from his vaulted fame  
And mark how it would crumble.

*1st Mag.* 'Tis most true :  
This rare colossus is our handiwork,  
Rear'd on these mystic rites of Ahriman.  
Sap we this pedestal—it falls : but we—  
Where are we ? it may fall upon our heads.  
So we must work it delicately. Japhet  
Was sorely vex'd at Nimrod's freak last night ;  
To break upon him in the dead of darkness  
With that fantastic dream !

*2nd Mag.* Ay—and his humour



*Enter JAPHET.*

Hark—here he comes

Arch-conjuror ! muttering silly sorceries.

Now let him answer me the dream—the dream—

Or that grave skull shall ride on a spear top,

And there may ponder it.

*Japh.* [*advancing*].      Ye ministers

Of the great Yesdan, who descend with me

From his bright presence on the mountain-tops

To do these rites of darkness—haste, begin,—

Invoke dread Ahriman, but mutter low :—

[*The Magi busy themselves in performing the  
mysterious ceremony.*]

Pound the curst homony—and mix anon

With blood of she wolf :—sprinkle in the bowl

The dire ingredients that ye know so well :

Stir the foul potion—stir—and stir— and stir—

Then cast away unseen.—O Ahriman,

We are thy slaves—and thus propitiate

Thy baneful vengeance :—as we do thee honour

Turn evil from us ;—but let threefold ill

Blast the unhallow'd wretch who dares deny

Thy dread eternity : ye elements

Dissolve and scatter him, that coming after  
No man shall name his place.

*[Distant thunders are heard, the cave shakes.]*

Almighty Yesdan !

This is thy token : Thou art wroth with something  
Which darkness cannot hide. Let us begone :

I am appointed soon to meet the king.

*[JAPHET and the Magi hurry out of the cave.]*

*Nim. [advancing].* For the last time :—or tell me,  
holy man,

Why Nimrod may not do his little will.

But Ahriman perchance can ward a spear

For those who worship him ? These men have duped me.

*[Exit.]*

*Inner Apartment of the Temple.*

*JAPHET appears alone arranging the various instruments of his art : a noise is heard without, and he hurries to a chart of the Heavens, over which he is seen poring with much earnestness, when NIMROD enters.*

*Nim. [advancing behind him with a bare sword in his hand.]*  
The good seer hunts about the fields of Heaven  
To find the game of Earth ! so learnedly



[*He plunges his sword into the priest's back.*

Oh God ! my God !—the king is mad—Nimrod !

Wander'd in Heaven.

Thou'st kill'd me.

But surely thou didst read in yonder chart,  
How I did stand behind thee with this sword,  
And how I prick'd thy entrails with it—thus.

[*Pierces him through again.*]

*Nim.* Then farewell, priest,

For I have yet a little time to live,  
And something still upon my hands to do.  
Is it not so, good seer? Farewell, farewell! [*Going.*

*Japh.* [*leaning on his arm*]. Yet stay a little, long thou  
canst not spare ;

For a star culminates, and falls anon :  
And ere these limbs are well at rest in th' earth,

Thine too shall weary, but shall find no couch,  
Save the bare soil, to comfort them. Death flings  
His mantle o'er me : as the hues of life  
Are shrouded from my eyes, what forms are these  
Which rise upon my sense ? Gates—temples—towers  
And gorgeous palaces !—A few short years  
They glitter in the sun ! Now are they gone ;  
And not one time-worn solitary arch,  
Nor shapeless fragment of one crumbled pier,  
No—nor a stone of all yon giant pile  
Holds place amid the desolate morass,  
To tell the world where Babylon once was.

*Nim.* Ha ! does he mock me still ? But truth may  
come

With his last breath :—Be it. These works of mine—  
Creatures of wood and stone—what if they perish ?—  
But I—myself—my name—this style of king—  
The principle of conquest and of power—  
Shall it not flourish to the end of time ?  
As long as man can bend a knee or neck,  
So long must live the memory of Nimrod.  
What hast thou more, old fool ?

*Japh.* That style of king !  
There thou hast oped perchance a wholesome well :  
But for long ages it shall spring with blood,

To swamp men's liberties. Alas! what ills  
Shall wait on royalty!—At last it may be,  
In some far region of this varied globe,  
A hardy race, train'd in the school of virtue,  
And taught by long experience of woe,  
Shall stamp it with the seal of law; that e'en  
A gentle woman or a tender child  
May reign secure within men's stubborn hearts,  
Like jewel set in adamant. Till then  
That name shall be a sound of strife and wrong,  
Unspoken by good men—save with a curse.  
Be so remember'd, if thou wilt, O king.

[*He seems to die.*]

*Nim.* He dies,—and with him dies my thought of him.  
I could have spared him to have learnt the dream.

*Japh.* The dream—hear then. That greedy bird is  
thou—

Thyself, O king! beware! the beast is come. [*Dies.*]

*Nim.* [*approaching and examining him*].

Oh that he were not dead! so I might kill him  
For that last lie—but 'twas the last—enough. [*Exit.*]

## SCENE V.

*Within the Palace. Women and Minstrels are heard singing.*

*Enter OPHIR looking on the ground thoughtfully.*

Oph. CRAVEN ! O curse ! how then to rise again ?  
The thing has gone too far : it might have done  
Some two years past ; but now, if I but raise  
This finger, so it be not to salute him,  
Where am I ? 'tis soon answer'd : By my life,  
Ere I could speak a word, or look a look,  
It might be some ten spears would make their way  
Under my ribs, and meet in my heart's core.  
God—it were madness, sheer—— [*Loud thundering.*  
Hark ! there is music,  
Will drown these silly minstrels, as old Ocean  
Licks in the puny rain—roll on, roll on :  
[*It lightens*] Flash—flash—thou lightning, that the  
wondering earth  
May overlook my shame.

*Enter OBAL and ASSHUR.*

Here comes old Obal :

Welcome, old friend !

*Ob.* Ophir ! What ! here already !

It wants an hour or more to banquet time :

Is it not so ?

*Oph.* So, so : an hour at least ;

'Twill soon be danced away : leave that young man

To chase the minutes as becomes his years ;

A maiden's kiss, methinks, may smoothe the scar

He wears upon his forehead—One word, Obal :

*[ASSHUR passes quickly among the women as if  
searching for somebody.]*

Why in such breathless haste ?

*Ob.* It must be short :

For I must back to th' tower—Where is Nimrod ?

For if he be the God he deems himself ;

'Twere well to speak to yonder thunder-cloud,

Which comes to couch upon his goodly tower ;

So that the workmen grope about in vain,

Lost through the mist, while ever and anon

The distant lightnings, flashing busily,

Roll their big thunder to proclaim a storm.

*Oph.* I heard it, Obal: but a cloud of shame  
Has couch'd upon my breast, and such fierce storm  
Rages within, that all without seems fair.

Here's the storm, Obal! [*Striking his breast.*]

*Ob.* Would 'twere so, indeed:  
But in such clime an unfamiliar shadow  
May to ill-practised eyes appear a storm.  
What ails thee? tell me, *Ophir*.

*Oph.* Shame—Shame—Shame:  
To stand, unloved, rejected, spurn'd, because . . .

*Ob.* 'Tis shame indeed to broach such fooleries,  
When age hath set a seal of wiser token  
On thy worn cheek and furrow'd—

*Oph.* Nay, but hear me;  
Age has done me no wrong—I blame not age:  
Nor was it that I lack'd aught of love's graces,  
That her lips flouted me: if it were so,  
I could have borne it, though they had proclaim'd me  
More hideous than the ugliest bloated toad  
That fattens on the bog. But Obal—*craven!*  
That I should live to hear her call me *craven!*

*Ob.* Thou hast done nothing to deserve the name:  
Why shouldst thou be so gall'd?

*Oph.* Nothing, methought:  
Yet she so press'd it home, that I believed it:

For why does Nimrod hold this place above us,  
But that we fear to step to where he stands?

*Ob.* 'Tis pretty reasoning, and when pretty lips  
Press it so home; e'en Ophir is convinced:  
When I would press it—Ophir only laugh'd;  
And said we stood right well to stand so high.  
But this mysterious she—

*Enter NIMROD.*

Ha! here he comes—  
Our one omnipotent! He seems thunder-struck.

*Nim.* Ophir!—and Obal—I am glad to meet you:  
I would have sent for you. There was a something  
I would have asked of you to aid me in;—  
Something——

*Ob.* Speak Sire, we are our master's servants.

*Nim.* Ophir! what ails thee? thou art silent now?

*Oph.* Sire, I was thinking—of what Obal told me,  
How mightily it thunder'd, that he came  
To ask your highness to appease the storm.

*Nim.* Faugh! let it thunder; I am not a child,  
To tremble at a noise.—Is Obal frightened?

*Ob.* Doth my lord read his fright within his eye?  
Be it. But know, Sire, that the workmen stand

Aghast, not frightened, while their eyes and ears  
Point to yon cloud, nor heed they aught beside :  
Long had it boded the dire wrath of Heaven ;  
Till stooping right upon our topmost works,  
All there is darkness now.

*Nim.*

Well ! be it so :

And where's the man shall dare to fear that darkness  
More than he fears his king ? They shall work on,  
Though ten such clouds should meet. 'Tis I who say it.  
They shall work on. Hence—let them know my will.  
And he who dares say nay—

[*Drawing his sword.*

[*Exit OBAL, beckoning as he departs to ASSHUR,  
who follows him.*

*Oph.*

His sword is wet.

By Heavens 'tis blood. [*Aside*] That veteran sword  
of thine

Methinks it blushes at its own great deeds,  
To show them to the day : Something just done, Sire ?

*Nim.* Ay, and done well, Ophir. This is the blood  
Of that old hypocrite, the arch-seer—Japhet.

*Oph.* Chief of the Magi—dead !

*Nim.*

As yonder stone :

I wanted none of him, so sent him straight  
To his own Ahriman ; and may he serve him  
Better than me. I hate such babbling dotards.



*Oph.* But, Sir, his name was honour'd with the people;  
And when they hear their prophet is no more,  
It may be they'll make inquest of his death,  
Why, and by whom, his blood was let to flow;  
And then, perchance, they'll hold themselves aggrieved  
By loss of such a man.

*Nim.* Art thou a fool—  
To talk to me of people's grievances?  
Did not I do it? and am I not king?  
Tho' no eye saw't, I'll not disown the deed:  
Else it were easy gloss'd. I—Nimrod did it—  
Of my own pleasure. Be their inquest answer'd.  
In a few minutes meet me for this wedding,  
Tho' faith I hate such foolery. [Exit.

*Oph.* Blood! more blood!  
And why not mine? For murder is his food!  
His eye glares hate, and grinning cruelty  
Lurks couchant at his mouth, to scoff our rights  
And sneer away our sympathies. Just Heaven!  
Why have I breathed to fan such burning crimes—  
Such huge impieties, that men stand scared  
At their extravagance, and half admire  
What, but for their proportions, they would loathe,  
And leave with one accord to the vile wretch  
Who takes free pardon for his own base deeds

To rid the world of common nuisances !  
It bites me to the core to think upon it :  
And I—his favour'd friend ! his counsellor !  
So fond of selfish ease, careless of right,  
And impotent of reason, that he trusts me  
With his heart's secrets !—with his unfledged thoughts !  
Speaks but the word—enough : it must be done,  
And I must do it—

*[Folding doors are suddenly opened and display the  
Banqueting Hall, with the Guests assembled and  
Minstrels playing: a throne is placed in the centre,  
and an altar in front.]*

Now I must go dance,  
And eat, and drink, and sing ; the king commands it.

*Enter MILCAH leaning upon her attendant, and preceded  
and followed by a guard. She looks round the hall in  
a hurried manner, then places herself away from the  
crowd.*

*Mil.* Ha ! what is here ? this mirth !—this merry  
music—

This crowded hall !—this glittering preparation !—  
Is that an altar ?—O thou God of Heaven,

Thou in whose name it stands—whose truth it pledges—  
What have I done ? How have I sinn'd against thee—  
That thou art here to ratify this work ?—  
Oh—but thou art the God of right and good ;  
Thou hast no part with violence and wrong.  
What though the murderer looks up at Heaven,  
Grasps his red knife, and syllables thy name ;  
Is the deed thine ?—The base adulterer  
May burn pure incense on thy holy altar ;  
But dost thou purify his unclean touch ?  
Oh ! if thou wilt not speed thy thunderbolt  
To blast such mockery,—'tis for thy good purpose ;  
That we may reason on thy mysteries,  
And teach ourselves to be the instruments  
Of all-wise destination. Ah ! that I  
Am bold to think, but when I would the rest,  
I pant and faint—and then I call on Asshur.  
Alas, he hears me not. Oh, Asshur !—Asshur !  
I was brave once—but it was all in thee.  
I was strong once—but then thy strength was mine.  
Now that I stand alone, alas ! how feeble !  
That I must suffer every shameless taunt  
Which slavish wretches who have learn'd to bear,  
In turn will not forbear ! O couldst thou see it !

Oh, Asshur—couldst thou see this company,  
These guards, that altar, and me standing here—  
The very sky would blacken with thy frown!—  
Thou canst not see it—for thou art away,  
Far—far away ! while I thy wedded wife—

*NIMROD enters and ascends the throne.*

O God forefend the rest—for *Thou* canst see.

*[Falls upon her knees.*

*Nim.* *[to one of the Attendants].*

Are all in order for this ceremony?

*Attend.* The priest, Sire, is not come : the holy  
Japhet

Was summon'd to attend the royal pleasure  
Before this hour.

*Nim.*                    If the good prophet tarries,  
He has good cause :—perchance some sacrifice  
To Ahriman which must be first complete,  
Before the pious man can leave his chamber.  
His rites must first be done : so press him not :  
But let the next in station minister,  
And bless these nuptials ; for I would forthwith  
Conclude this happy day with mirth and feasting.  
The sun shall not go down on a sad face.

*Mil.* [*aside*]. Oh could I die! so should I do his will,  
For I would smile in death.

[*Trumpets sound.*

*Magus.* Attend—all ye  
Who are here met. Nimrod, our royal master,  
Takes for his wife this captive maiden Milcah.  
If then there be who can show cause against it—  
Let him stand forth—else hold his peace for ever.

[*MILCAH starting up attempts to speak, but falls  
back apparently lifeless, and is supported by OPHIR  
who had advanced to speak.*

*Oph.* I here stand forth: and ask of thee, O King,  
Who now would take this maiden for thy wife --  
If she consents thereto—so answer me.

*Nim.* Answer thee, *Ophir*! I a king, and thou—

*Oph.* Perchance thy equal; therefore answer me:  
Doth she consent?

*Nim.* What's her consent to me?  
Am I not king?—and she my slave, my own,  
The creature of my will, whom I may kill  
If so I choose, as now I kill thee, man?—

[*Raises his spear, and is thrusting it at OPHIR, when  
a sudden flash of lightning illumines the hall; the  
spear drops to the ground, and NIMROD falls back  
on his throne.*

*In the midst of thundering OBAL enters. Women come forward and support MILCAH.*

*Ob.* Where is the king ?

*Oph.* He who was king is there.

*Nim.* Obal ! dispatch the traitor—didst thou hear him ?

*Ob.* Hold, Sire, and listen all. The mighty God  
Who made the Heavens and Earth and us his creatures  
To minister his will—that must be done,  
His will not thine, O king ! Thy storied tower,  
That mounted step by step to greet the sky,  
Stands there abash'd, like a forbidden suitor,  
Heaven wills not such alliance.

*Nim.* But *I*—Nimrod—  
What if *I* will it ? So, my brave guards, seize him,  
Seize Obal—Ophir—all—all—seize, I say,  
Quick—seize—and kill them—

*[The Soldiers stand motionless.*

*How ? then I myself—*

*[He is rushing from his throne with his sword drawn, when all the Guards present their spears towards him : He stops, and starts—then falls back into his seat, and hides his face.*

*Oph.* Sit there, vain man, and choke thy bootless rage,

Till thou canst learn to hear more patiently  
That thou wert what thou wert but by our leave,  
And for our good ; this scorn'd, and that withdrawn,  
That thou art what thou art.—But Obal, speak,  
And tell thy tale to this full company :  
We'll have no secrets more, no mysteries,  
To cloak the simple form of common reason :  
But men shall glut themselves on truth henceforth,  
So may they thrive in wisdom.

*Ob.*

Hear ye then :

Soon as the black cloud, which had turn'd our day  
To night, had pass'd on eastward, our hard slaves  
Peep'd from the shelves and holes where they had lain  
While the storm lour'd, and then they saw and cursed  
The beam of light which called them back to work.  
And now they stood and lean'd upon their tools  
Hundreds and hundreds grouping : and all eyes  
Follow'd the cloud, half fearing, half in sorrow ;  
When, as if shamed to be so quench'd, the sun  
Gleam'd proudly forth, and on the instant, lo !  
The arc of God was painted in mid air,  
Of colours so divinely beautiful,  
That all gazed motionless, and read therein  
His present Deity : and as they stood  
And not a whisper stirr'd the silent air,

A still small voice was heard, and every heart  
Leapt at the sound ; and every soul was fill'd  
With full perception of that covenant  
Which God once sware—as our own sires have told.  
Oh, what a burst of shame was blurted forth !  
Wailing, remorse, and passion ! that so long,  
In scorn of such an oath, they raised their hands  
To beard Heaven's majesty. But now a noise  
Wounded our ears more fearful than the thunder :  
For each unloaded his o'erburthen'd conscience,  
Not as he wont in known familiar sounds,  
But in strange accents and discordant gabble ;  
It might have been of beasts, but that the tones,  
Though blended all into such uncouth jargon,  
Were nicely varied in their several mouths,  
And token'd reason, though impossible  
Of comprehension. And as still they argued,  
Each with his neighbour, pleading zealously,  
With unavailing eloquence, by degrees  
Zeal led to rage, and rage to dire offence,  
And frenzied hate and vengeance.

It was then

I would have quell'd them with th' accustom'd horn :  
'Twould have been easier, with this sword of mine,  
To stop the rushing stream of old Euphrates.  
For maniac fury flash'd from every eye :



And now they raised their axes, spades, and staves,  
Each against all. Soon some had gain'd the height,  
And now were struggling to unlay huge blocks  
Of brick and granite, where the work was fresh,  
To roll them down upon the crowd beneath ;  
When a strong flash from the retiring cloud,  
And thunder instant following, changed their purpose,  
And all awhile were silent.

Then they moved—  
Among themselves in speedy guise, as 'twere  
Searching for friends and kinsmen, whom they greeted  
It seem'd intelligibly : for oh ! what joy  
What rapture of embrace, as sire met son,  
Brother met brother ! And they soon did form  
In social companies, and from the works  
Descending filed away this road and that  
To the four quarters. One of all the bands  
There lingers yet. You saw that youth whom Nimrod  
Favour'd this morning : that one band he call'd,  
And they obey'd him, old, young, one and all,  
As he had been their sire. They come to th' palace,  
And will be here anon—Ha ! here he is.

*ASSHUR enters cheering his companions, and rushes, with  
a weapon in his hand, towards NIMROD, who still sits*

*motionless ; he is stopped by OBAL, who holds him by force.*

*Ob.* Be calm—be calm.

*Assh.* Now, how can I be calm ?

Where is the king—Nimrod ?

*Ob.* Nay, kill him not.

*Assh.* Why should he live ? Say then why he should  
His death be my good deed. [live.

*Ob.* Nay, kill him not :  
His blood will stain us, though 'twere good to spill it.—  
Let him depart.—

*Assh.* First let him give me back  
My wife, my Milcah—

[MILCAH recovering looks wildly round.

Give me back my wife

Thou robber, or thou diest—my wife—my Milcah !

[Disengaging himself from OBAL, he rushes towards  
the throne.

*Mil.* Asshur ! my life ! it is —Asshur, O Asshur !  
[She hurries to ASSHUR and intercepts him in her arms.

SIBYLLA ANGLICA.

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

## ADVERTISEMENT.

By Sibylla is meant that abstract idea of wisdom, beauty, and benevolence, that “emanation of the all-beauteous Mind” which every man conceives to be embodied somewhere in woman, if the native tone of his feelings is not slackened by long exercise, or jarred by misuse. The child worships it in his mother; the youth in his mistress. Nor is it necessary that the object of his devotion should be present, or even existent: his memory will recall it, or his imagination may create. Be it some lovely creature of fancy, or a substantial thing of sense—“*mulier toto jactans e corpore amorem*,” it waits on him at home and abroad, spurring him to honour, and scaring him from shame. This was the soul of chivalry; and, though now less avowed to the world, I would still believe it the main-spring of our free energies. The poet still identifies his genius with the heavenly Muse; and, in a fine personification of Nature, the philosopher still acknowledges

and admires the beautiful system of the universe. What rivets the Roman Catholic before the image of the Virgin? What fires the Mahometan to barter earth for paradise? The yearnings of poesy—the meditations of philosophy—the aspirations of religion—do they not all embody the perfection of beauty, of wisdom, and of goodness, in the shape of *woman*?

Then as Persia and Libya, Cumæ and Phrygia, and other favoured places of the old world, had each their proper Sibyl by the gift of the poets, so I would now claim Sibylla Anglica for my country, though her influence extends over the habitable earth.

The first idea of woman's perfection we imbibe with our mother's milk: and although, during the thoughtless years of childhood, and in the partial developement of our feelings, it may lie dormant for awhile, yet it does not die. For as soon as the healthy glow of youth has ripened in our hearts a sense of beauty, and our curiosity has discovered its well accustomed residence in woman, this awakens the dormant images of its former associates—wisdom and goodness, and our fancy builds a composite of the three qualities under the same

imaginary form. In this creature of imagination the soul delights, nor needs the presence of its material counterpart: till, by the sport of circumstance, an object of life comes so presented to our regard, that the minion of our fantasy is at once merged in it. A real woman is made the idol of our adoration; and in her we contemplate the perfection of beauty, of wisdom, and of goodness.

Such is the philosophy of love: and when the object of our admiration shall become altered by age, or removed by accident, may our memory still teem with its pristine image.

Uno spirto celeste, un vivo sole  
Fu quel ch'io vidi: e se non fosse or tale,  
Piaga per allentar d'arco non sana.

In the endeavour to trace generally the free operations of a curious and imaginative mind, whilst the passions of youth are all bearing their peculiar influences, the poet is introduced as speaking and acting in his proper person. It is almost unnecessary to say that this is done solely for the sake of conformity with the great prototype whose metre has been adopted, and

whose style could not otherwise have been imitated effectually.

With respect to this metre, the *terza rima* of the Italians, its chief characteristics seem to have been overlooked by most of the few Englishmen who have attempted it. These characteristics I understand to be, a studied brevity of expression, the most vigorous diction, and a very frequent termination of the sentence—particularly at the conclusion of every third line—even so far as to give an air of abruptness. The Saxon words of our language, which mainly contribute to constitute our language of poetry, seem to harmonize most agreeably with the spirit of this metre; the common effect of the more prolix and debile offspring of the Latin being, by a paraphrase of our native words, to soften down their harsh vigour and dilute their meaning.



SIBYLLA ANGLICA.

CANTO I.

## ARGUMENT.

THE Poet's unrest. His prayer to the moon, in which he alludes to his early schemes for distinction, which had been baffled by competitors, or thwarted by public opinion. The illapse of imagination.



## SIBYLLA ANGLICA.

### CANTO I.

**I**T was that season, when the harden'd grain  
Burthens its mother stem, and the staid Moon  
Rides on in full-orb'd pomp as loth to wane:

It was that hour, the antipod of noon  
In this diurnal, when the crude-supp'd hind,  
Stretch'd slumbrous, dreams the dawn has broke too soon.

Me too capricious Sleep, erewhile so kind,  
Spurn'd as for frolic : and if e'er I thought  
To steal upon her, like a startled hind

She darted off, just as I deem'd her caught.  
And if I dreamt, it was no grace of her's,  
But feverish day-dream ; for my soul was wrought

With shadows,—like a steed who feels the spurs  
Bore at his flank, but sees no way ahead ;  
Or restless ghost among the sepulchres.

I wander'd from my couch, tho' false of tread  
As drowsy drunkard : but my drink was woe ;  
My drowsiness had lull'd me with the dead.

The night-air freshen'd on my clammy brow :  
My spirit throve in me : I cast around  
To find some clew—but found nor where nor how.

E'en as a stag just for the chase unbound  
Shakes his cramp'd muscles, opes his unblink'd eye,  
And stares all quivering to survey the ground :

Thus in amazement stood and trembled I :  
For I was where I knew not, nor could guess ;  
But what I saw my credence did belie.

Still a strange heat my temples did oppress :  
And as I bared them to the Queen of night,  
To her did I my silent thoughts address.

O thou—in Heaven Selené beaming bright !  
O thou—on Earth Diana, queen of chase !  
O thou—in Hell Proserpina, dread sp'rit !

If still to mortals thou unveil'st thy face,  
As erst before the young Endymion,  
—I too derive me from a shepherd race.

My honour'd father and his first-born son  
Tending their quiet flocks I left erewhile ;  
And fain would mix me where the wild game run.

Methought I should have led the gallant file,  
And sprung the foremost on the beast at bay :  
But now am I outrun—by strength or guile.

Once as I poised my spear in act to slay,  
A brother hunter tripp'd me, and I fell :  
And he that tripp'd me slew the hart that day.

Again a brave buck panting down the dell  
Swung his fat haunches as he lagg'd along :  
A crowd of hunters press'd to bear the bell.

And I had clear'd me from the jostling throng,  
And measured with my eye his brawny crest ;  
His iron antlers sprouted large and strong.

I mark'd the point where I should pierce him best :  
Just where his forward shoulder bared the lung,  
One well-aim'd thrust had sent him to his rest.

There was a dark-mouth'd cavern, overhung  
With beetling granite and wild eglantine :  
Therein with one slant bound the quarry sprung.

I threw me from my steed : then art thou mine—  
I breathed in triumph, and rush'd in—but lo !  
A many-headed monster raised a whine

Which curdled my fresh blood ! I started fro,  
Gathering for fight, yet trembling ; as a cat,  
When all unwares she meets her mortal foe.

Right midway in the cavern's mouth he sat ;  
Full-fledged with eyes and noses, mouths and ears :  
Above, all heads : and he on heads did squat.

The top were fair, unblanch'd by wants or fears :  
These smiled indifference, but spake no word :  
Below some laugh'd, and some seem'd wet with tears :

But all were silent. Then I bared my sword,  
And would have pass'd him to secure the prize :  
But forth from his unhonour'd parts there roar'd

A thousand voices hoarse and liar-wise ;  
And while they brawl'd for peace, they whisper'd war,  
And spat defiance. Then I strain'd my eyes,

To mark those foul-mouth'd members that would mar  
My sport ; I would have lopp'd them ; but his tail  
Stretch'd into darkness backward flat and far.

Nor which did welcome me, nor which did rail,  
Could I distinguish ; but the rabble sound  
Baffled my sense : for evil must prevail.

Still had I hewn a passage ; but around  
My distanced comrades gathering laugh'd and jeer'd,  
To hear the monster and to see my stound.

But thou, thrice-potent ! worshipp'd, loved, and fear'd !  
If ever thou didst pour upon my brain  
Visions of glorious things with thee inspired ;

If ever thou didst lead the chase amain,  
And I have follow'd thee o'er flood and fell;  
Oh! shed thy spirit o'er my heart again:

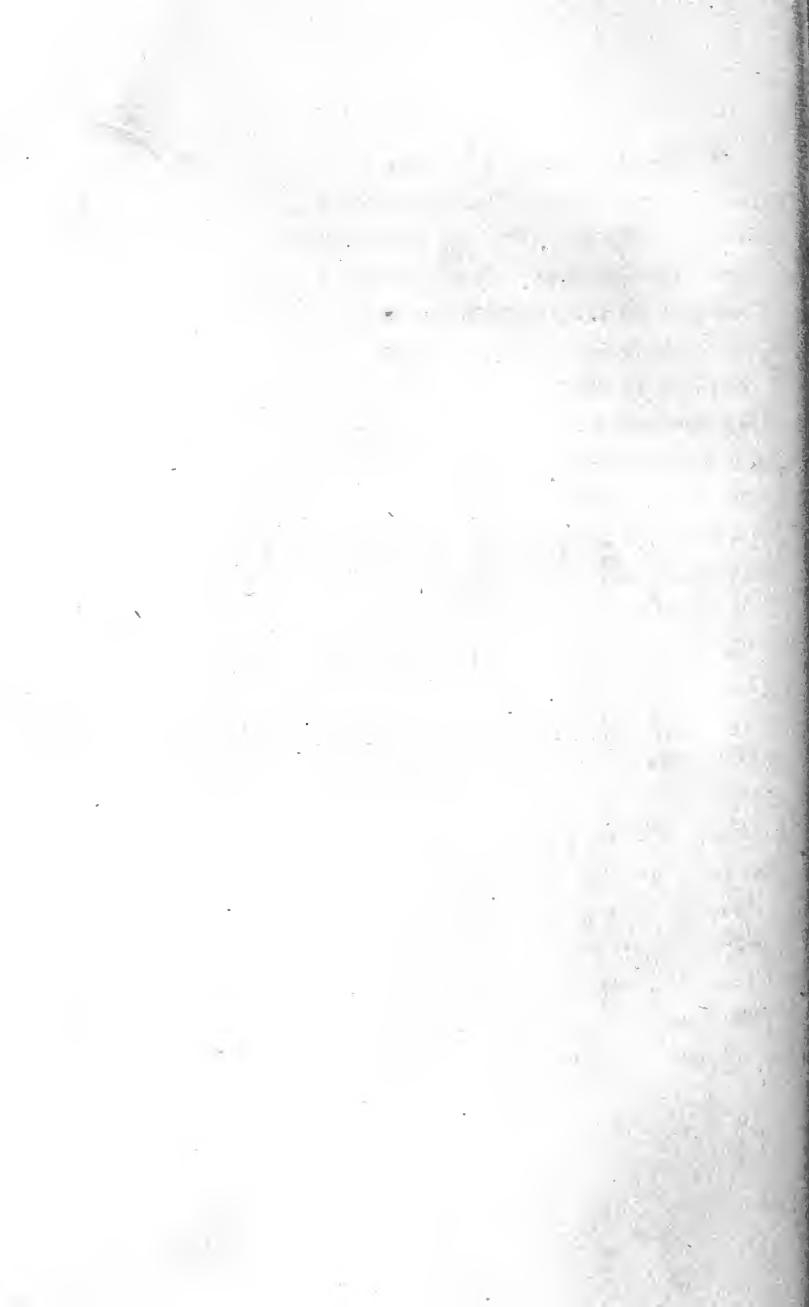
Or snatch me hence to where thou sitt'st in hell,  
Girt with weird fiends and throned in mystery;  
And let me there in black oblivion dwell!—

Thus thought I—were it thought, or fantasy.  
The Moon had reach'd the keystone of Heaven's arch,  
And not a rack bestreak'd the spangled sky.

Sudden—before my frightened fancy march  
A legion of dim forms and shapes unholy!  
For such in vain this stale earth might ye search.

I bent in wonderment, and ponder'd lowly  
O'er the strange vision: but my soul was sad:  
I scarce did breathe for very melancholy.

Then all unsensed I fell, and stared as mad.





SIBYLLA ANGLICA.

CANTO II.

## ARGUMENT.

His melancholy reverie dissipated by Sibylla, to whom he afterwards confesses his yearnings of love and ambition.



## SIBYLLA ANGLICA.

### CANTO II.

[wake :

**M**ETHOUGHT I was asleep, and fain would  
For my sleep was not rest ; but on my heart  
A mountain brooded : God ! that it would break !

It was not pain I heeded : sudden smart—  
E'en to the death—I could have welcomed it :  
There be slow pangs that mock the deadly dart.

Long years, methought, I struggled with this fit  
Of cumbrous lethargy ; and, while I lay,  
My friends pass'd onward, and forgot me quite.

I would have cried aloud and pray'd them stay ;  
But part from drowsiness, and part from pride,  
The words half-utter'd dropp'd, and died away.

Ah me ! I seem'd to slumber open-eyed,  
And saw the giant load upon my breast :  
Oh for an arm to heave the pile aside !

Just as my heart collapsed beneath the pest,  
There pass'd an angel figure, as by chance,  
All loosely mantled in a myrtle vest.

My life was ebbing, when she seem'd to advance,  
And with her finger touch'd the whelming weight :  
At that soft touch I started from my trance.

The Moon still linger'd in her high estate,  
As when I fell : so Misery sports with time,  
And crowds whole years within a moment's date

Like sailor stranded in a distant clime,  
I stared upon the novel scene around :  
It seem'd the work of mountebank or mime.

And standing at my side indeed I found  
That self-same figure I was dreaming of :  
Was it a dream, or vision real and sound ?

O thou, that redolent of things above  
Dost wander here below in mortal guise,  
O let me worship—if I may not love.

I spake, and gazed adown in humble wise,  
And bent upon the ground a reverent knee ;  
Till her clear silver accents bade me rise.

Oh then I bounded up in ecstasy ;  
It was Sibylla's voice I knew full well :  
That voice to me was sweetest melody.

Awhile I stood, as charm'd by secret spell :  
Or like some sick wretch when forth gleams the Sun.  
Oh could I ever in that presence dwell !

Then she began :—If Wisdom must be won,  
She must be courted thro' the livelong day,  
Nor left until the Moon her course hath run :

For while the Moon leads on her bright array,  
Wisdom walks loveliest, and may be seen  
In every star which marks the azure way.—

But I :—my guide, my mistress, and my queen,  
It was no sluggard's pastime that I slept :  
No couch was mine where rest could e'er have been.

Rather a hundred vigils had I kept,  
Nor wiped the dew-drops from my chilly brow  
Till from his chamber the young Morn had stepp'd,

Than that brief slumber which I slept e'en now.  
Ah me ! to think of them that sleep for aye !  
If such th' endurance of a moment's woe—

What is eternity ?—Then watch and pray,  
While time is time, she said, and gather sense  
E'en from a dream, or whencesoe'er you may.

An offset from the main Intelligence—  
Essential Order, man's ethereal part  
Abhors confusion's jarring elements.

Hence Sleep's false phantasies oppress the heart,  
While reason slumbers : hence our waking powers  
Still strive for truth, by science and by art.

Alas ! cried I, if we a few short hours  
Were cast to wallow in chaotic mass !  
E'en at the thought my vital current lowers.

How would the fiery spirit fight to pass  
Th' impervious elements, and dart—here—there,  
Within the brute unorganized morass !

As when keen hounds surprise the grazing deer,  
Deep in some wood, he dashes to and fro  
Check'd by his antlers, till he weeps for fear.—

Sibylla smiled :—It may perchance be so :  
But He, whose justice is, hath potency  
To work his will. Enough for thee to know.

But wherefore rolls thine eye so heavily ?  
It doth belie thy heart : for Youth doth sit  
Upon thy brow, as 'twere for mockery.

So young, so grave ! what looks will years befit ?—  
Then from my brow she brush'd the hair aside,  
And with her finger something wrote on it.

How long wilt thou confound me thus ? I cried :  
Thy mystic characters must still perplex :  
Oh syllable the word, and be my guide.

For thou dost ken what pains my spirit vex ;  
Thou that wast with me at my mother's breast,  
Thou that wast with me when my flesh did wex.  
Then wast thou wont to leave my limbs to rest,  
With smooth content to ease my daily toil,  
And to my pastimes lend a sweeter zest.

'Tis thine own frowardness my care doth foil,  
Replied Sibylla ; and she smiled again :  
Such smile, I ween, ne'er grew on mortal soil.

Then no foul wishes did thy bosom stain ;  
No false imagining ; no thirst of fame ;  
No love—ah ! worst of all to love in vain !

My heart's blood boil'd within me at the name ;  
And down a big tear roll'd : I sigh'd aloud,  
And both my hands I raised to hide my shame.

Then thou didst hear that secret vow I vow'd :  
Oh ! breathe it not ; lest some malicious wind  
Should cast my treasure to the swinish crowd.

But thou ! for that rebuke not ; for her mind—  
Methought it was a counterpart of thee.  
Oh ! pardon and forget, if thou art kind.

But fame ! is fame—fame too denied to me ?  
She softly press'd my arm, and whisper'd low,—  
It may be so ; and happy if it be.

O God ! I am foreclosed of all below !  
Riches—I heed them not : and love—ah ! love  
I can unlearn : but fame must I forego ?

Then my soul wander'd, like the outcast dove,  
And found no resting place. Sibylla frown'd ;  
And pointing upward—Is there nought above ?

She spake no more : I trembled at the sound ;  
The pealing words burst on my ears like thunder ;  
I dared not lift my eyes from off the ground.

But when at length I roused me from my wonder,  
With arm unmantled pointing at the skies  
She still stood motionless, and seem'd to ponder :  
And pity temper'd anger in her eyes.



SIBYLLA ANGLICA.

CANTO III.

## ARGUMENT.

THE Sibyl discourses upon fame and the perils of imagination—whose illusions she promises to explain. The ridiculous folly of paradox, which is prompted by a love of fame. REASON—the only touchstone of truth and dissipator of doubt.



## SIBYLLA ANGLICA.

### CANTO III.

**F**AME, like a full-gorged vulture, as she flies  
May stoop and lift thee to her dizzy height;  
Then drop thee on a rock to agonize.

This is a whim that feeds the wanton's spite:  
And know—'tis wormwood in the cup of life  
To hang upon the will of freakish wight.

Fame too hath habited with fiendish strife;  
Hath couch'd upon the tongue of orator,  
Fired hellish torch, and thrust th' assassin knife.

Earth-bred, on earth she garners up her store,  
Owns homage to th' ignoble multitude,  
And quits herself in perishable ore.

But thou art not of that inglorious brood  
Who scrape the kennels with a hope of coin;  
To soil thee in the finding—be it good.

She spake, and as in prayer her palms did join :  
Then started in impassion'd ecstasy,  
And pluck'd her mantle round her swelling loin.

Did I not mark e'en now thy venturous eye  
Peer at the Moon ; and thy lips moved methought  
In agony of utterance towards the sky ?

It was a hardy deed with peril fraught  
To woo that stately empress of the night :  
Alas ! her favours may be dearly bought.

She heard thy prayer, and pour'd a beam of light  
Full on thy brain : I hurried to thine aid,  
Too late to save—but I may mend thy plight.

For the rare vision of yon peopled glade,  
Which seems to knit thy soul in wonderment—  
I know a sleight that can the knot unbraid.

Ah ! then my rashness I did sore repent :  
For all around me there did close a train,  
Of apish mode but human lineament.

Sibylla !—Heaven forefend ! I cried amain :  
Whence and for what this hideous antic throng ?  
How discord jars upon my aching brain !

The Sibyl smiled :—Nay, tremble not ; ere long  
Thou shalt behold a stranger scene than this.  
But fear not : courage makes the weakest strong.

The Moon—she shadows forth vain phantasies :  
These are true images of men foregone,  
Whose features are unmark'd of common eyes :

And some upon the earth still breathe, and run  
The race of fame all anxiously, as if  
They knew the value of the prize when won.

These were the sires of paradox in life :  
Eager for fame, from out the womb of Truth  
They ripp'd young Falsehoods with a magic knife.

And folks were fill'd with wonder ; and in sooth  
Well might they so, for 'tis a wondrous art  
To mingle true and false, that one seems both.

Those bending earth-ward, standing there apart,  
They were philosophers of ancient days,  
Who fain would nurse their brain to choke their heart :

See how that Sceptic weaves his logic maze !  
And yonder Cynic, just to catch men's eyes,  
All beastly couching in the public ways !

The Stoic there, to prove himself all-wise,  
Preaches that all the world beside are fools !  
None be too vain to rail at vanities.

As at the surface of still sunny pools  
The glassy fishes court a flattering ray,  
So these rare Sophists wanton'd in their schools.\*

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\* Otez à nos savants le plaisir de se faire écouter, le savoir ne sera

But what this myriad crowd, Sibylla ;—say ;  
 The narrow porticoes for this were small :  
 And mark ! their habit speaks a later day.—

Did I not tell thee so ? That crowd is all  
 The mimic herd of double-dealing men,  
 Whose names still hover o'er their bodies' fall.

All that now are, and all that e'er have been,  
 Who whored against the truth for lust of fame,  
 Met here—a goodly gathering—may be seen.

Years were too short to number every name ;  
 But this or that should'st thou desire to know,  
 Point where thou wilt, and I will tell the same.

She spake ; and led me slowly to and fro,  
 Thro' such strange groups of manlike monster shapes,  
 It seem'd the fancy of a raree-show.

Thus in some garden-close th' imprison'd apes  
 Hold up a mirror to the passing crowd ;  
 One laughs, one loathes, another wond'ring gapes.

rien pour eux. Ils n'amassent dans le cabinet que pour repandre dans le public, ils ne veulent être sages qu'aux yeux d'autrui, et ils ne se soucieraient plus de l'étude, s'ils n'avaient plus d'admirateurs. Rousseau writes thus, professing to copy Seneca. It is too often true :

Fame is the spur that the clear spirit doth raise  
 (That last infirmity of noble mind)  
 To scorn delights and live laborious days.

*Milton in Lycidas.*

Then I:—My mistress, first, if it be good,  
Say what strange character thy finger traced  
Upon my forehead, as enrapt I stood.

For now all nature is to me new-faced;  
The dark is bright, the bright is brighter grown,  
The low exalted, and the high debased :

Yet all seems shadow'd by a misty brown,  
Which makes me doubt if what I see be real ;  
And what stands firm seems toppling at the crown.

She stopp'd and spake:—'Twas REASON: for thy weal  
I mark'd those letters on thine outer brow,  
The touchstone of existent and ideal :

For wherefore boots it, that fresh waters flow  
Within the bowels of the earth, unless  
They well and irrigate its surface too ?

So Reason, the quick spring of human bliss,  
Stagnates beneath the weedy growth of folly,  
And swamps the garden of man's happiness.

But thou—put off that idle melancholy,  
And know thyself for action all adapt ;  
And thrive on thought and aspiration holy.

What !—dost thou feel thyself so chain'd and strapp'd,  
Like a led horse, to follow in the train,  
Proud of the gold wherewith his loins are trapp'd ?

Better be harness'd to the cumbrous wain  
To strain and swelter thro' the livelong day,  
Than stretch in self-sick indolence of brain ;

Or caper with the modish crowd away ;  
Or chant in concert to their silly glee ;  
Or play and prate, as others prate and play.

But dare to think ; and in thy thinking be  
Thyself thy counsellor : for thou must give  
An answer for each thought, as thou art free.

Nor grieve that thou canst little know, but strive  
To learn how little can be surely known ;  
And filter doubt in meditation's sieve :

Doubt—the first-born of thought ! That misty brown,  
Which seem'd to shadow o'er thy prospect, rose  
Of thought : for he is all-assured alone,

Who thinks on nothing, while he nothing knows.



SIBYLLA ANGLICA.

CANTO IV.

## ARGUMENT.

OPINION and custom to be weighed by reason: as also the doctrine of philosophers, Christian as well as Heathen—Some of whom the Sibyl points out to the imaginative eye of the Poet:—But not so mysteries confessedly revealed by Heaven; they must be believed implicitly upon the evidence of their revelation. She teaches the nature of all human knowledge and belief. She points out several assertors of paradoxical, absurd, or impossible doctrines.



## SIBYLLA ANGLICA.

### CANTO IV.

**W**ELCOME then, Reason : welcome to my soul !  
It sinks into my forehead ; and I feel  
Myself alone, above the world's control.

For what, if idiot dote, if drunkard reel,  
If madman rave, if false knave cheat and lie,  
If lazy rogue his daily diet steal :

Shall I the more, sane, sober, honest—I,  
Who know myself a real identic being,  
Play mimic tricks to Heaven's discerning eye ?

Such were my thoughts : the which my mistress seeing,  
Then contemplate, she said, this antic throng,  
And train young Wisdom in its earliest spring.

See strolling, th' old Philosophers among,  
Yon reverend fathers, who would madly try  
To prove the right by argument of wrong :

And forged a weapon of philosophy ;  
Thinking by syllogistic artifice  
To bind or lacerate the Pagan's eye :

Then blindly groping lead him in a trice  
Right to the blaze of truth : they might have known—  
To build upon the sand a vain device.

How Plato there, and Aristotle frown  
To be so dogg'd !—But who, I ask'd, are these,  
Who seem for very love to press them down ?

Ammonius that, Nestorius, Eutyches,  
And Arius, Athanasius, Origen,  
Who tamper'd with forbidden mysteries ;  
And strove to prove to feeble-minded men  
Incomprehensible essence, and define  
The undefinable commands of Heaven.

If man could have thought out those truths divine,  
What need of heavenly messenger ? But they  
Would hold a stranded whale with fine-spun line !

The Word confest of God—what need, I say,  
To torture logic rules to prove it true ?  
Is God a man, to sport with yea and nay ?

Mind, there be heavenly things, and earthly too,  
Which our sense reaches not : these must be seen,  
If seen at all, by secondary view :

For nought which is not still, tho' it hath been,  
Know we of truth : and many things still be  
Which yet we know not, if to us unseen.

Alas ! cried I, how little can I see  
Of all that is ! how little feel, or hear !  
Must all beside be left a blank for me ?

Listen, she said, and check that silly fear :  
Know, space is infinite ; and not a spot  
Lies there untenanted, or far or near.

Innumerable things of various lot,  
Creatures of size and quality, fulfil  
The wondrous whole ; and emptiness is not.

Of these is Man : a thing of sense and will,  
Action and passion ; capable to know,  
But still for knowledge straining, doubting still.

For few his senses are, and feebly shew  
Those specks of Nature's multifarious scheme,  
Which shine most manifest to mind below.

Still may he contemplate the mystic theme ;  
And, gazing on the scene within his sense,  
Reason on what things are by what they seem :

And so assent shall rise of evidence,  
And faith shall serve for knowledge, to endue  
His soul with intellectual competence.

Thus may he learn to winnow false from true,  
And mounting step by step the visible way  
Soar in bold thought beyond his sensual view.

But oh!—lest for the flattery of a day  
He stifle truth, and blind th' accustom'd sun  
To dazzle with a phantom's mimic ray.

Still thro' the myriad crowd we wander'd on :  
And all came pressing instant on our sight,  
As hounds on game, or courtiers king-ward run.

Mimes, mystics, mountebanks, all rarely dight,  
Preachers and wonder-workers! authors too,  
Borne down with books, were bending more to write!

Of all here met I would remember two—  
Berkeley and Warburton; who late would try  
To court the world in habits quaint and new.

Still in grave guise they woo'd the public eye :  
But folks gazed half in reverence, half in mirth;  
For the rude boys had twitch'd their wigs awry.\*

Sibylla smiled :—the feeble sons of Earth,  
Humble or high, of genius cold or warm,  
Straining at wisdom bring but folly forth.

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\* ——— Vellent tibi barbam  
Lascivi pueri.—

But say, my mistress, what that Shepherd form  
Stretching on tiptoe from yon column's height,  
As if his flock was wandering in the storm ?

His flock ! she said : they died, or fled for fright,  
When first he stepp'd above his native soil,  
And left them to th' inhospitable night :

Time was, he lived by truth and honest toil,  
Penning and shearing, all unknown to fame ;  
Till lust seduced him to unrighteous spoil.

Syria his country, Simeon was his name ;  
Who two score years stood towering to the skies,  
And took for pride what was indeed his shame.

Mark how each fool in admiration vies ;  
While demi-natured with the brutish stone  
He cheats blind men, and all-seeing Heaven belies !

Hence learn too, thou ! nor deem him there alone :  
Know many a Simeon in the breathing world  
Still takes God's name to glorify his own.

Her close-drawn mantle then she half unfurl'd,  
And from her bosom drew a telescope ;  
And back the long hair from her brow she curl'd.

Cast far or near, she said, among the group  
Thousands are scatter'd, scarce observed to-day,  
Who shone of yore, and made the world their dupe.

See Radbert there of Corbey, who would play  
With men's conceptions like a conjuror,  
And bad them tell their senses—off! away!

Touch, taste, and sight! said he; boast these no more :  
*This is my body—this my blood*, is writ :  
And who shall dare to read, and not adore ?—

But God is Truth, and tho' He pass man's wit,  
He doth not sport with it; He cannot lie,  
Whose wisdom, as his power, is infinite.

And then her glass she fitted to my eye;  
And seated on a stone I saw a man  
Hooded and coped; and books lay scatter'd by :

He seem'd as in a dream or trance to scan  
Vocabularies, thence to gather truth;  
And things adapt to words by inverse plan.

And bread lay near him, which seem'd bread in sooth:  
But—*hoc est corpus Domini*, he cried,  
And straightway tore his Lord with hand and tooth!

And men throng'd round, and kneeling by his side  
Worshipp'd for wonder. Then in angry tone  
The Sibyl spake:—Take Reason for thy guide;

Else thou, e'en thou, may'st worship wood or stone.



SIBYLLA ANGLICA.

CANTO V.

### ARGUMENT.

THE Poet is checked in his reasonings by doubt—He despairs of wisdom and grows indifferent to knowledge. He sinks into the abyss of sloth and carnal luxury. The Sibyl leaves him. Fashion pourtrayed under the image of a cat. Its unnatural allurements. The baneful and debasing effects of sensuality. The heartlessness of Fashion.



## SIBYLLA ANGLICA.

### CANTO V.

**T**HE Moon was leaning from her topping pride :  
As some swink'd huntsman, who hath clomb a peak,  
Just stoops to plunge him in the fresh'ning tide.

And all this multitude, of which I speak,  
In one brief moment had I scann'd : methought  
It was the study of a sleepless week.

And my pulse quicken'd, and my brain was wrought  
With passionate doubt ;—like a loose-tenter'd sail  
Flapping and shifting, by cross winds distraught.

Then what is Truth—and where ? if Sophists fail  
With all their implements of wordy war,  
Their points and counterpoints,—shall I prevail ?

I—feeble-will'd, ill-learn'd, of luckless star,  
Who shrink repugnant at the thought of toil,  
As journeying petrel smells the storm afar.

Rather, cried I, forswear me heady coil !  
Hence, bootless learning ! hence, philosophy !  
Ye grave-faced follies that my heart's ease spoil !

But I will plume me to fair lady's eye,  
And thrive luxurious on her ready smile,  
Drink her free breath, and lisp th' unlabour'd lie :

(—If that I may not, unimbued with guile,  
Pour my clean soul in well-requited love :—)  
Such easy study suits our carnal style.

For wherefore should we drudge and sweat to prove  
The truth of things invisible below,  
Which all securely may be view'd above ?

Is it our degradation we would know ;  
How, doom'd to clear and till this rugged waste,  
We sow for happiness—but gather woe ?

Or haply we would spur our jaded taste,  
Gloating for pastime at forbidden fruit ;  
And climb perchance—to be the more debased ?

O let my studies my poor nature suit :  
Here will I sit and slumber thought away ;  
Or spend my sorrows on a scape-goat lute :

Or, at the blush of ever-willing day,  
Snatch healthy mettle from my gallant steed,  
And court the hazard of his random way :

While o'er the difficult hill or level mead,  
O'er yawning ditch, o'er brook, bar, hedge, and fold,  
He bounds obedient where the game may lead.

Or, like the wise Anacreon of old,  
Crown me with roses, till the wanton air  
Full teems with luxury ; and I will hold  
The lying juice betwixt myself and care :  
How all shall be as pleasant as first love,  
And life as dear as the just-yielding fair !

As one who would the Syren poppy prove  
Feels lusty spirit mantling in his veins,  
And dreams of Paradise and Gods above ;  
So did I wrest me from distressful pains,  
And revell'd in the thought of native ease,  
Like weary sailor as the long voyage wanes.

But while I stood and whistled down the breeze,  
Sudden—beneath my feet the ground wax'd soft,  
And in a trice the mire had clothed my knees.

At first I cared not ; but down-gazing scoff'd  
At such trim fools as spurn their kindred clay :  
Then, like an ill-match'd mistress, loathed and laugh'd.

At length I shouted :—Here ! a hand, I pray !  
Here—help—Sibylla !—But she was not there :  
She, like a pleasant dream, had pass'd away.

Ah me ! I was alone ; and the night air  
Rose chill and biting o'er my hectic brow ;  
And my breast quiver'd, for the flesh was bare.

'Twas then the mud felt soft and warm below ;  
And half for wantonness, and half for need,  
I laid me down, as one to rest would go.

God ! how the filthy element did spread  
To close upon me, like a leching hog :  
Scarce from its wrap I saved my vital head.

Its touch was pleasant : but the greedy bog  
Still suck'd and suck'd ; as it would drag me there,  
To choke my spirit with its earthy fog.

As trav'ller, who hath crept within some lair  
To screen him from the hyperborean blast,  
With leg advanced awaits the home-bound bear :

So did I wait upon the warm mud cast :  
Then sloth came over me ; I would have slept,  
But that I fear'd such sleep might be my last.

There while my head above the mire I kept,  
Towards me with tail erect a spotted cat  
At dainty pace along the surface stept.

Never a thing was seen so sleek and fat ;  
And round about my face he rubb'd and purr'd,  
And planted on my cheek his velvet pat :

And with his bushy tail my neck he furr'd,  
And lipp'd my features in uncouth desire,  
And with such artifice his dull will spurr'd :

For man's hard whim had quench'd his natural fire ;  
And wean'd him from the lurements of his kind,  
To fix his fondness where he owed his ire.

Then round my face his full length did he wind,  
And laid him at my mouth, and watch'd my eye,  
Purring a requiem for my dying mind ;

Till hardly could I breathe ; and scarce would try,  
For it seem'd labour : e'en to wink was toil :  
All that I felt of life was fear to die.

O ye, who rail at flesh and fleshly coil,  
And paint yourselves a Heaven of sloth and ease,  
Deeming it doom of Hell to drudge and moil ;

Know Sloth can dart a thousand stings, which teaze  
The spirit to distraction : of all pains  
That rack the soul, none crueller than these.

There as I lay, my belly, groin, and reins  
Grew blown and fester'd ; and my arms and thighs  
Broke into carbuncles and rotten blains :

And through the mud, foul bugs and greedy flies,  
Lizards, and ugly newts, and worms, and toads,  
Crawl'd to my sores, and seized them gluttonwise.

Oh! then I shriek'd—that from their far abodes  
The birds came wondering at my causeless raving;  
As of some maniac whom a false fiend goads.

At which the cat, all changed of his behaving,  
Burst into rage and clutch'd my lips amain,  
Like a wild tiger in his fiercest craving.

Ah me! how treachery envenoms pain!  
Thou too! methought: if I be torn by thee,  
How shall I trust to aught on earth again?

But now the wily slime had master'd me,  
And block'd the ruddy portals of my breath;  
Tho' for a moment still my eyes were free.

O God! how hard it is to welcome death!



SIBYLLA ANGLICA.

CANTO VI.

## ARGUMENT.

He is rescued again by Sibylla, who drags him senseless from the abyss, and leaves him in a clear fountain. There he recovers his consciousness, meditates upon his former affections: and offers a sacrifice of natural purity to his guardian mistress.



## SIBYLLA ANGLICA.

### CANTO VI.

**I** PEEP'D above the foul and joyless plain,  
Yet fear'd to sink beneath ; when dimly seen  
Sibylla rose upon my sense again.

The traitor cat fell crouching from her mien ;  
Then scamper'd headlong off, and in his haste  
Shew'd his base scars, and smear'd his velvet sheen.

She, like the fabled heroine, featly paced  
Upon the graceless swamp, and not a streak  
Of the lewd element her sandals laced.

Then at her arm's full length abash'd and weak  
She caught me by the hair : I would have cried  
For pardon in my shame,—but could not speak.

So spiritless I draggled at her side ;  
Like dead goat rescued from the snowy drift,  
Which some brave dog lugs home at eventide.

Four days methought pass'd over ; but the fifth  
She brought me to a rock-encircled dale,  
Through which a stream its glassy course had rift.

If poets had been there to forge a tale,  
They might have feign'd how some gigantic ox  
Planted his foot, and stamp'd that pleasant vale.

To north, and east, and west, the earnest rocks  
Watch'd, like a mother o'er her sleeping child,  
Lest harm befall it from the wind's rude shocks.

But from the open south the breeze came mild,  
To foster herbs and flowers, more seemly fair  
That the brute mud so filthy look'd and wild.

Right opposite from out its stony lair  
Leapt the brisk stream, and busied thro' the dell  
Down to the bog, to steep its troubles there.

What next befel my memory fails to tell ;  
Till, as from death, I woke—and found me stretch'd  
Full in the basin where the waters fell.

How like a drunkard then I loathed, and retch'd  
To cast my earthy bane, and blush'd, and wept !  
For the clean well my conscience home had fetch'd.

Right cheerfully the guiltless waters leapt,  
To do their work of purity and love ;  
While back the loose dirt to its home they swept.

Heavenward the birds were carolling above ;  
Around the sheep were browsing ; and hard by,  
Cooing his faith, was perch'd a turtle-dove.

And the fresh foliage and the cloudless sky  
Cried— Paradise ! but ah ! a thought within  
Whisper'd me Hell :—how all is pure, but I !

O ye whom Accident hath plunged in sin,  
Who back have crawl'd to cleanly haunts again,  
Ye know the shame that swell'd my bosom then.

Long while I lay and chafed upon my pain ;  
Till, as a plant comes bursting from its seed,  
An old idea sprang fresh upon my brain.

But shall I write what none will care to read ?  
How o'er my mind the phantom tyrant rose,  
To sluice my eyes and make my wrung heart bleed ?

Was it Mialma ? for her eyes, her nose,  
Her lips, her voice—they were Mialma's own ;  
If my sense fail'd not in my passion's throes.

Erst had I known her in my youth's full tone ;  
Then, though we conversed with a single soul,  
Yet were we twain : but now I was alone.

Still her sweet image o'er my vision stole,  
So true, so palpable, I could not press  
My passion, but its utterance burst control :—

Mialma, speak ! if thus I may address  
What seems Mialma ; art thou come to me—  
Wretch that I am, to comfort my distress ?

Or would'st thou taunt me in my misery ?  
What, though thine eye to me is light of life ;  
How shall I personate myself to thee ?

For I have been where all foul guilt is rife,  
Lewdness and gluttony and beastly sloth ;  
And deem'd it pleasure, till I found it strife.

But oh ! that thou art here—I should be loth  
To give for all bright Heaven this little spot :  
This is my Heaven while it holds us both.

For what is bliss to me where thou art not ?  
Thou sun of my heart's bloom ! thou summer shower  
To my parch'd spirit, forcing tender thought !

It was not I forgot : the goodliest flower,  
So it be rescued not by delicate hand,  
Is foul'd if greedy swine come mouthing o'er.

But all's forgiven me : for I see thee bland  
As sister's counsel. So we shall be one,  
And thrive on love in this delicious land.

Our living world shall be ourselves alone :  
And when we die, our souls, like two sweet tones,  
Will blend and float away in unison.

I paused :—she spake not : ice ran thro' my bones.  
 I grasp'd—she was not there : alas ! but I  
 Lay still adrift upon the chilling stones.

And pain came over me : I sigh'd ;—and why ?  
 Was it for this my body's breath was given ?  
 O God, that I could laugh ! But I will die.

The air was soft around ; a smell of heaven  
 Came wafted to my sense : I knew the sign ;  
 It was no flesh that could my heart enliven.

I rose upon my limbs :—" O gale divine,  
 I feel thy perfume : hail ! my heavenly Queen,  
 For thou art near me."\* Then I built a shrine

Of smooth-worn pebbles with dry herbs between,  
 Wild thyme and sweet-briar ; and atop I piled  
 A dainty heap of mushrooms gather'd clean.

Then from a flint I struck out fire and wiled  
 The freakish spark, and pour'd a flattering breath  
 Till the vain element look'd up and smiled.

The fruit began to hiss, as 'twere at death,  
 And Nature's choicest savours did effuse ;  
 Which curl'd up heavenward in a purple wreath.

\* ὦ θεῖον ὀδμῆς πνεῦμα, καὶ γὰρ ἐν κακοῖς  
 ὦν ἡσθόμην σου, κἀνεκουφίσθην δεμας.  
 ἔστ' ἐν τόποισι τοῖσιδ' Ἀρτεμις θέα. EUR. HIP. 1389.

How fragrant were its odours ; such as use  
To dally in the air when rustic bard  
Breaks his long fast, and courts the morning Muse!—

It is not with strong meats and reeky lard,  
Nor luscious headbane wrung from the innocent grape,  
Sibylla, that I court thy nice regard.

These simple viands, gender'd in the rape  
Of dewy Nature by nocturnal Sprites,  
From her clean womb have started into shape.

With these I woo thee. On the glassy heights  
Of Fancy guide me : when I grope the shades  
Of Dulness, pour around thy meteor lights.

I spake, and pluck'd a lock of grass which maids  
Call lady's-hair when they a flowering go,  
And stript the seed-knots from their barren blades :

These o'er the fruit I cast, and bending low  
Snatch'd hurriedly and ate ; the rest slow-burning  
Stole into perfume, such as angels know.

Like some astronomer again discerning  
His favourite star, despite the jealous sun,  
Or fearful comet on his track returning,

I knew the presence of my guardian One.



SIBYLLA ANGLICA.

CANTO VII.

## ARGUMENT.

THE Sibyl reappears, and welcomes him to Vallepura. She discourses upon carnal pleasures; rebukes his indolence and then anoints his eyes that he may witness the secret woes of sensual indulgence in the inmates of *Carnale Stagnum*. Solomon is conspicuous among the multitude.



## SIBYLLA ANGLICA.

### CANTO VII.

**T**HEN came a voice like music soft and clear :—  
Welcome to Vallepura :—while the birds  
Stinted their parley and flock'd round to hear :

And the still sheep, and lazy-grouping herds  
Forgot their pasture ; and the babbling stream  
Stole down more smoothmethought at those sweet words.

As some tall burglar, whom the faint star-beam  
Has tempted forth, returning laden home,  
Starts back and trembles at the morning gleam :

So trembled I to know my mistress come :  
What, tho' I hail'd her like a hope of Heaven ?  
I knew my guiltiness and fear'd my doom.

In sooth it was not doubt to be forgiven :  
But to some hearts forgiveness ill-deserved  
Is a keen sword right dexterously driven.

And now my recreant voice I would have nerved;  
But shame so cross'd the purpose of my thought,  
The restive syllables from utterance swerved.

And like a culprit mute I stood, yet fraught  
With vindication : but the Sibyl spake,  
And smiled as wont :—By Pain is wisdom taught :

But they who for their teacher Pleasure take,  
All sweet tho' first her lesson, yet at last  
Must dive to learn it in yon noisome lake.

I saw thee in its filthy trammels cast,  
But would not have thee lost : without such aid  
Have few unscath'd that dangerous quagmire pass'd ;

Not blighting upas casts a deadlier shade ;  
Nor pool more putrid stench'd the caves of Hell—  
Tho' all were true that fabling bards have said.

No thing of Heaven within its pale can dwell,  
But straightway cumber'd is with earthy fat :  
*Carnale Stagnum* men have named it well.

To think upon it—Faugh !—She turn'd and spat :—  
But I will tell thee all ; the fountain-head  
Of that huge pond, and that unnatural cat.

With molten flesh the greedy bog is fed,  
Run from the living sores of mortal man  
Who born in wealth to luxury is bred.

Since in old time the healthy world began,  
Disease hath gender'd in his guilty blood  
Each year, while hard Contagion spreads the bane :

And he who now would glut his idle mood,  
Must brave th' accumulated ills of time :  
Perchance to hand them to his infant brood !

Meanwhile, cajoling Fashion purrs a chime,  
Ill-tuned to nature : still the heartless quean  
Would feign desire, to justify her crime.

Ah me !—I sigh'd :—To think where I have been !  
But what, if o'er my eyes the mud had closed ?  
It might have darken'd many a troublous scene.—

Beshame thee, sluggard, who would fain have dozed  
O'er opportunity, and now would sink  
Beneath the burden Virtue hath imposed !

Was it for this I bad thee rise and think,  
When erst I heaved away the cumbrous load ?  
To know the way of wisdom—and to shrink !

Was it to deaden in yon brute abode,  
Foreclosed of birthright thought, as lingers pent  
In marble block the melancholy toad ?

Then gaze within that beastly element ;  
Nor think to quench ethereal entity  
By piling earth upon its sensuous vent.

Earth is its bane ; to vex unspeakably,  
But kill it may not : of the which a soul,  
To thrive all-happy, must be first all-free.

She spake, and from my sunken altar stole  
An ashy particle, and in her palm  
She crumbled it, like chymist in his bowl :

With aspect gravely sweet and boldly calm  
She laid it on her lips, which oped anon  
In melody and hymn'd a holy psalm.

I stood and wonder'd at the delicate tone :  
But then a kiss she press'd on either eye ;  
That kiss thrill'd thro' me to the farthest bone.

And when I waken'd from my ecstasy,  
I stared around ; and lo ! a wondrous field  
Lay stretch'd before my visual faculty !

This dark and desert mud no more conceal'd  
Its depth of filthiness : that magic kiss,  
Like beam of morn, its hideous world reveal'd.

There many a wretch, whose wanton dreams of bliss  
Gloated on flesh and carnal company,  
Lay floundering in the desolate abyss.

From every country whose congenial sky  
Hath garden'd nature's loveliness, that men  
Have joy'd in arts and fine society,

Thousands were cast in that pestiferous den :  
Poets, and gay romancers, sages too ;  
And many a seeming saint rued there his sin.

I turn'd aghast and sicken'd at the view :  
Be these, methought, the dainty sons of ease,  
Like huge frogs knotting in this filthy stew ?

And a dense murmur struggled in the breeze ;  
As smoke is seen o'er some laborious town  
To memorize the forger's agonies.

Oh, what a crop of heads I gazed upon !  
Some shorn, uncoped ; some grey, tho' not with years ;  
Some whaled afront, as they had worn a crown ;

Some all dishevell'd, smear'd with dirt and tears,  
Droop'd, like gay flowers in a dabbling storm :  
E'en the secure thought conjures back my fears.\*

There one of thoughtful mien and kingly form  
Stood, like a lily peering from the sedge ;  
A huge book poised upon his weary arm :

And at his breast there hung the mystic badge  
Of kindly union, such as since would build  
The dome of Concord on fierce Ocean's edge.

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\* Che nel pensier rinnuova la paura.—*Inferno*.

In his full eye effeminately wild  
I read a host of carnal agonies,  
Fame, learning, luxury—all strain'd and foil'd.

And he spake scornfully, in jesting wise ;  
And spurn'd the world, as he were free of it,  
While still he hugg'd its vainest vanities :

Then as he sicken'd, lo ! a mirthful fit  
Would steal upon his fancy, and anon  
Amid grave saws he blurted bitter wit.

Was this the great and glorious Solomon !



SIBYLLA ANGLICA.

CANTO VIII.

## ARGUMENT.

HE sees Sardanapalus, and other kings who devoted their lives to sensual indulgence : and afterwards the lascivious poets who have pandered to the intellectual lusts of mankind—Anacreon and his followers: Rochester; Herrick, and another who had stolen his lyre as he slept. Francesco Maria Molza.



## SIBYLLA ANGLICA.

### CANTO VIII.

**T**HEN spake Sibylla :—Of the kings of th' earth,  
Thousands have left fair realms for this foul spot.  
Rejoice, O peasant, happy in thy dearth !

See there Sardanapalus ! that poor sot  
Teazed gentle Virtue to a deed of blood :  
Yon bloated tyrant found a luckier lot.

But pass we on : for all that royal brood  
Teach but one lesson ;—e'en as selfish swine,  
Men too are gluttons if ye cast the food.

The tender soul they swamp with meat and wine :  
Till, like a lapwing from her flooded nest,  
Warm Pity flees, and chilly Pride goes in.

But heaven-lit Freedom burns from breast to breast,  
And Reason's watch-word passes on to-day :—  
*One man is monarch but to speed the rest.*

She paused with frowning mien, and turn'd away :  
Then led me to the pool, where hardly seen,  
Beside the shelf a clustering squadron lay.

Their attitudes, half antic, half obscene,  
Would ward disgust with lust or merriment ;  
And, where a bay-wreath on their brows had been  
Was now a print incrustated feculent,  
Like some sad shrub beneath th' o'erreaching rime :  
From the stirr'd mud a putrid vapour went.

As when grape-pamper'd wasps in squeezing time  
Maudlin and spent have dropp'd into the vat,  
Their nimble venom cushion'd in the grime ;

Thus wriggled impotent this side and that  
The laureat shoal :—Oh, from Parnassian height  
To fall like o'erripe fruit, and welter flat !

I scarce could hold my laughter at the sight :  
But a sad twinge of sympathetic shame  
Thrill'd at my heart, and made me rue their plight.

Perchance 'twas but th' unruly lust of fame,  
Or pride of wit, methought, that brought them here,  
To pay the price of straining for a name :

While every fribbler that can gibe and sneer  
Owes more to ridicule ; but mean intent  
Screens the poor fool and saves his neighbour's jeer.

Full well the Sibyl read my fancy's bent :—  
'Tis not, she said, th' outburstings of full mind,  
Not great resolve, impatient for a vent,

Would thus have wrecked them ; but unhealthy wind  
Swells the vain fop to build a worthless name  
Upon the loose opinions of his kind.

He licks up flattery, as the glutton flame  
Drinks the rank oil, to flicker for a day :  
No draught too foul to tempt a thirst of fame.

She turn'd to gaze where hundreds wallowing lay :  
All these were pimps of intellectual lust,  
Who guided wanton spirits to their prey.

Forth from the mire his head an old man thrust,  
Then look'd effeminately round and sigh'd—  
Wine, O Bathyllus ! I am choked with dust :

Here ! roses—roses—But the while he cried  
A host of followers caught him by the vest,  
And dragg'd him back : meseem'd he would have died.

These as of every age and clime were drest,  
But most, methought, of France and Italy :  
Some British forms I mark'd among the rest.

There Rochester cast down his alter'd eye :  
Herrick lay motionless in sleepy guise :  
Meanwhile a little bard came dancing by ;

And while the veteran hid his blushing eyes,  
The shameless youngster crept beneath his cloak,  
Pilfer'd his lyre, and sang Anacreon-wise.

Scaped from the pool, hard by upon a rock  
There sat a pitiable form of woe,  
Munching stale figs and weeping o'er a book.

The hair was matted on his grimy brow ;  
About his loins a dripping mantle clung,  
Which still he pluck'd to cover him below.

A tarnish'd lyre upon his neck there hung,  
But now the chords lay slack and spiritless,  
Erewhile to many a wanton pastime strung.

Still in the desolation of distress  
A gleam of beauty struggled through his shame,  
Like fire just flashing in its smokiness.

O'er my cold limbs a creeping shudder came ;  
That this fine spirit, who perchance was held  
An idol once, should be without a name.

Was it hard fortune, or the rust of eld  
Had marr'd his comeliness ? for now he stoops  
Like some fair tree by jealous Boreas fell'd !—

Blame not nor eld nor fortune that he droops ;  
Young as first love, and fortunate as fame,  
He must be number'd with Ambition's dupes.

Ambition brake him from his wedded dame :  
Whate'er befel unanchor'd as he toss'd  
Thro' the wide world—Ambition take the blame.

She spake :—my blood ran curdling, as if frost  
Had crisp'd its channels : Oh ! that one who strove  
For glory should be so ignobly cross'd !—

Poor fool, for glory who would barter love !  
For tinsel stuff, she said, he pays good gold.  
Glory enough if one true heart approve.

Go, ask the conqueror, who securely bold  
Strides o'er the slain, and bid him calm attend,  
And say what glory's worth when love is sold.

Or watch the death-struck soldier to his end ;  
His country falters on his lips ; his heart  
Bleeds for his wife, his sister, or his friend.

But hail him as a craftsman of thy art :—  
I ran to where the melancholy bard,  
Like a hurt eagle, sat and pined apart.

O thou—if I may crave thy brief regard—  
Why art thou here unhonour'd thus ?—I cried :  
Whate'er thy crimes, this doom is passing hard.—

He started from my voice—look'd round and sigh'd ;  
Then in his mantle wrapp'd his haggard face,  
Which seem'd, methought, with scars and ulcers pied.

Hence! hence! he scream'd: from this disastrous place  
Flee like a young stag from the tiger's lair:  
Flee, if thou still wouldst feed a hope of grace.

Foul as I am, I once was clean and fair,  
At Modena: 'twas there my young wife dwelt,  
And three sweet children call'd me father there.

Oh!—then I was a god!—But I have felt  
Since that bless'd hour like some new-farrow'd swine,  
Whose bloody jaws proclaim unnatural guilt.

Oh! I have felt—but spare this heart of mine,  
All the foul pest hath left me of my own:  
Nay—hear my life: so thou beware of thine.

My name is Molza: haply thou hast known  
How the fond Muse did string my fatal lyre,  
And how I wanton'd in its easy tone.

The pure delights which crown'd my household fire—  
I never prized them, till my tainted blood  
Ran wild and fever'd with unclean desire.

I sigh'd to thousands in that vagabond mood,  
And thousands sigh'd to me: but what are worth  
Thousands of counterfeit to one of good!

Mancini's beauty, nor Gonzaga's birth  
Could soothe the bitings of my conscious breast:  
But when I fell and grovell'd on the earth,



Poison'd at core like some poor wounded beast,  
And all came round to pity or to scorn—  
Go read Fracastor—let him tell the rest.

O Jesu ! would that I had ne'er been born !



SIBYLLA ANGLICA.

CANTO IX.

#### ARGUMENT.

RETURNING to Vallepura he indulges in solitude, and reflects upon his past life. When shame would have followed the remembrance of some passages, he is relieved by self-complacency, under the likeness of a bee, and so approves himself to Mialma.



## SIBYLLA ANGLICA.

### CANTO IX.

**I** TURN'D me from the woful spectacle,  
And hid my blushing eyes: for such scenes came  
Across their way as I were loth to tell.

O latest born of heavenly Virtue—Shame,  
Who crawl'st unaided from her dying womb;—  
Canst thou rekindle her celestial flame?

Abash'd and shuddering at the poor bard's doom,  
I hurried back to the delicious vale:  
Oh, might I dwell unseen in that sweet home!

Within the shelter of a leafy pale  
Of honeysuckles and close eglantine,  
I laid me down, and woo'd the perfumed gale.

Ye, who find Heaven in social draughts of wine,  
How poor your raptures to the sober joy  
Of welcome solitude!—and such was mine.

I counted o'er the past—from the babe's toy,  
To earnest childhood's little world of care ;  
Then how I frolick'd gay, a thoughtless boy :

How Wisdom, thriving on youth's simple fare,  
Grew with my lore, and sway'd my supple heart ;  
Till Love—Ambition—Pleasure, triumph'd there.

O for an alchemist, methought, whose art  
Could still lethean drops, to purge away  
From mem'ry's page this ill-remember'd part !

But ere that busy witness could bewray  
My secret conscience, a complacent bee  
Came buzzing round, to soothe me where I lay :

And o'er the woodbine flitting merrily  
She suck'd the dew of every luscious flower,  
And hived a fragrant beverage for me.

A young verbena grew within my bower,  
Fast by my head, upon whose tenderest shoot  
She cast her honey-drop with mystic power.

As love-spent damsel plucks the gushing fruit,  
Some choicest nursling of the sun and breeze ;  
Or hermit stooping for his favorite root ;

Thus eager I the honied sprig did seize ;  
And every sugar'd atom ate amain,  
Like jolly drunkard draining to the lees.

It was a charm : remembrance now was vain :  
Passions and follies past, though unatoned,  
No more could rouse me to a thought of pain :

But each sweet thing which that pure valley own'd  
Seem'd spread before me, that methought I saw  
The lovely form of Nature, all unzoned.

I gazed and wonder'd, till I scarce could draw  
My vital breath ; but soon it pass'd in sighs  
Of strong desire, and love became my law.

'Twas then that pictured scene of Paradise  
Concentrated to one bright spot, where lo !  
Mialma stood unveil'd before my eyes.

As some young senator, whose maiden brow  
Burns for the bay-wreath, rising first to speak  
Quails with a fear he fain would disavow :

All bold erewhile, but now abash'd and meek  
To find himself so launch'd into men's gaze,  
His accents falter, and his voice comes weak :

And, while he stammers forth the broken phrase,  
His quivering lip and hurried eye would seem  
To crave men's pardon, rather than their praise:—

So did I tremble at the sudden gleam  
Of that bright presence : then my tardy sense  
Strove to disown the semblance of a dream.

And leaning on my arm, with gaze intense  
And resolute to test reality,

I studied all her form and lineaments.

I sprang afoot, but still one reverent knee  
Clave to the ground, and there my bold gaze fell :—  
Or I was not myself—or that was She !

Speechless and motionless, as by a spell,  
I listen'd—and methought a voice I heard—  
“ Is this the way of one who loved so well ? ”

The small sweet note of some autumnal bird,  
Whose mate sits chill'd before the falling year,  
Was ne'er more musical than that brief word.

But then I spake :—Mialma ! that I fear—  
It is most true ; my fears do I confess :  
If thou wouldst more—'tis that I see thee here.

But that I fear, deem not I love the less ;  
Else to the crowd, where thousands fearless wait  
To boast and flatter for the suit they press :

There is Love's pageant, his bauble state,  
Where minister the foolish, false and vain,  
Ever with lip and eye importunate.

Thou wouldst not deem the wretch, that lifts the train,  
And plays the pomp of Loyalty, more true  
Than the rough sailor, or the simple swain ?



But if to fall from nature's ruddy hue,  
And sicken in the untimely shade of woe,  
Like some sad primrose shrouded by a yew :

But if to wander where wild braken grow,  
By plaintive brook, or melancholy tree,  
Musing, to prove the merry world a foe :

If to find solitude in company,  
While bursting from my heart, the tell-tale sigh  
Betrays it pregnant with the thought of thee :

If to stand trembling when I see thee nigh,  
Nor dare what most I would—be all the way  
Of one who loves to death,—that one am I.—

I paused ;—and one brief moment of delay  
Check'd the fresh current of my hopes, like frost  
Which falls unwelcome on the sprouting May.

As some fair ship, by adverse billows tost,  
Spreads for a breeze to clear her from the rock,—  
But one wave more—she strikes, and all is lost :

So did I strive ; but Fortune seem'd to mock ;  
And my soul struggled with the fearful doubt—  
To soar in bliss, or sink beneath the shock.

The moon was down, and not a star peep'd out  
From Heaven's black vault to comfort the sad night :  
Still *She* was there for whom my spirit fought.

But now methought she faded from my sight ;  
And through the darkness I discern'd an arm,  
Which seem'd as it would drag her off by might.

Heaven lend me grace ! I shouted for alarm :  
One word—one syllable—Mialma, speak !  
One look—and I will rescue thee from harm.

She turn'd :—her harrow'd brow, her pallid cheek  
Told of distracted thought and pain and woe ;  
And when she spake, her voice came hoarse and weak.

“ If thou art true, she said, approve thee so ;  
Abide, and faint not.” Luckless and forlorn  
I waited, feasting on those words, when lo !

In the far East I spied a gleam of morn.

SIBYLLA ANGLICA.

CANTO X.

### ARGUMENT.

THE dawn of his happiness. His impatience. His hopes, long deferred, are at length realized.



## SIBYLLA ANGLICA.

### CANTO X.

**A**S some worn pilgrim, who his steps hath sped  
O'er many a league towards that favour'd spot  
Where the meek Jesus laid his holy head,

At sunrise springing from his leafy cot  
Descries the rock-built fane, and thanks and prays,  
And deems the boon too great for mortal lot :

Thus had I hail'd the dawn of happy days,  
When, musing in the solitary bower,  
I spied the lodestar of my devious ways.

Now light and darkness seem'd to strive for power,  
My hopes foreran the day, to feed my sight  
With the bright form I darkly view'd before.

Methought I mark'd her in the false twilight ;  
But when at length peer'd forth the honest sun,  
My life—where was she ? God ! give back the night.

But now the beam-clad Morn came tripping on,  
And, as her mantle swept the dewy green,  
The conscious flowerets opening smiled anon.

On every bough new-feather'd broods were seen  
Preluding plunder of the ungarner'd sheaf,  
While the staid parent-bird explored the scene.

The sun laugh'd gay and scoff'd at murky grief;  
Fresh gales around the soft infection bore;  
The lated buds rejoicing burst to leaf.

Alas! that I alone was doom'd to pour  
My heart's warm sympathies in barren waste;  
Or fondly hive an unavailing store!

To break my spirit's melancholy fast,  
'Twere good, methought, to taste the dainty air;  
And feast my eyes on Nature's free repast.

Then on I wander'd, and defied my care;  
From Morning's full unrifled treasury  
Culling each sweet which seem'd most fresh and fair.

The glistening verdure of the dewy tree;  
The buzzing bees that early toil'd abroad;  
The kine diversely group'd about the lea;

The brook that fretted down its custom'd road,  
Like a spoilt child, or lagging in some bay  
Nursed there its petty wrath till it o'erflow'd;

The merry trout quick-glancing in the spray ;  
The matins of the lark, the finch, the dove ;  
The myriad flies that welcomed the new day ;

The flowery bank, the lawn, the hanging grove—  
All these, so sweet, so various, yet for me  
Spake but one word, and that one word was—*love!*

O tyranny ! then whither shall I flee ?  
Here all is beauteous ; let me linger here :  
But she is present in whate'er I see.

Here is sweet music ; I will charm my ear  
With nature's harmonies : my rebel soul  
Forswears my sense ; it is her voice I hear.

Is there no lure can fetch to my control  
This vagrant fancy that eludes my will ?  
O were I cunning in the mystic bowl,

Some nepenthéan potion to distil !  
So then my troubled heart would I allay,  
And laugh at sorrow as I quaff'd my fill.

Now the gay hours led on the jocund day,  
And rosy joy disported in Heaven's eye :  
Still cheerless I dragg'd on my weary way.

There was a grove which fill'd the vale hard by ;  
Thither I sped ; if water well'd not there,  
I yet might hide me from the sultry sky.

In sooth it wore a hospitable air ;  
Secure from prying falcon there might dwell  
The playful cony, or the timorous hare.

I stroll'd at random down the leafy dell :  
Then, if I must, methought, a hermit here  
I'll cut my staff, and dig my lonely cell.

Fain would I sip the sweets of social cheer :  
But—solitude be welcome to my heart ;  
To mine eye darkness ; silence to mine ear !—

But hark ! a bell !—I halted with a start :  
The tone rang thro' me ; as a close-aim'd shot  
Wakes the loud echoes round a grazing hart.

I trembled fearfully, yet fainted not ;  
I noted whence the sound ; I would have fled :  
A viewless power forced me to the spot.

Deep in the grove a velvet lawn was spread ;  
Thereon was built an altar, and above  
An agnus-castus rear'd his honour'd head.

And bowering myrtle hollow'd out a cove,  
Lined with sweet roses and the gay heart's-ease,  
And every flower that sacred is to love.

Enrapt I stood : when lo ! amid the trees,  
A milk-white image all my senses stole ;  
So wonderfully did its shadow please.



Now on my sight emerged the radiant whole ;  
My heart throb'd quick, joy danced within my eye,  
A beam of Heaven drove darkness from my soul.

White as the fleece that skirts the summer sky,  
Her long loose mantle flaunting in the air  
Display'd, methought, a present deity.

A simple orange-flower graced her hair ;  
Her pallid features struggled for a smile ;  
It was a smile, but token'd grief and care.

Drunk with intense delight, I gazed awhile :  
But now a holy Sire between us stood,  
Of learned mien and venerable style.

I scarce had mark'd him in my ravish'd mood,  
Though well his robe of lawn and saintly gear  
Had won him reverence of the godless crowd.

But how to paint the thrill of joy—of fear !  
The passionate concourse of tumultuous thought,  
That seem'd to snatch me from this nether sphere !

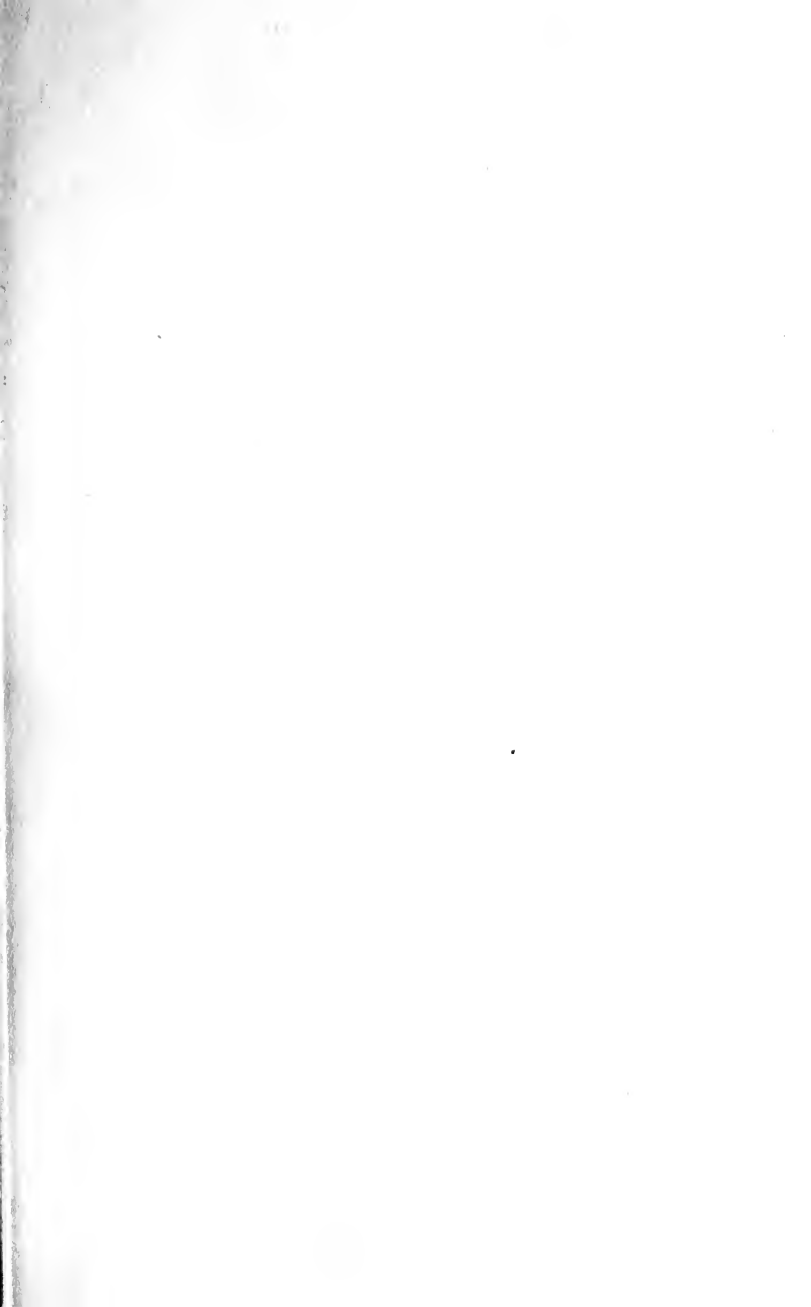
When to my side before the shrine, he brought  
The idol of my soul, and press'd her hand  
Within my hand, and that deep mystery taught—

How souls united in love's holy band,  
As fellow-pilgrims through these wilds of strife,  
May safely travel to love's father-land.

His blessing o'er—I led my wedded wife  
Forth from the grove, to the bright haunts of men ;  
Secure with her to stem the tides of life.—

So the fair ship, that beating long hath been,  
Mastless and rudderless, for Ocean's sport,  
At last descries her own dear shores agen,  
Wears up the bay, and anchors in the port.

THE END.





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